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MY PETS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

I SEIZED THE NIGGER BY THE SHOULDERS AND HAULED HIM OUT OF THE BASKET

MY PETS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

NEWLY TRANSLATED
BY
ALFRED ALLINSON

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY
V. LECOMTE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IT has been found necessary to omit two brief passages and a few scattered lines from *Mes Bêtes* in its present form to bring it into line with English taste.

THE TRANSLATOR

252454

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MY PETS

CHAPTER I

THE DOG I OWN, AND THE FOWLS I ONCE OWNED

MAY I assume you, reader, to be a sportsman—*and* a poultry fancier to boot? Well, then, did it ever happen to you that your sporting dog, with the best intentions in the world, and fully believing he was after game, chivied and killed your fowls?

This is quite a likely thing to have occurred, and one you have no call to be ashamed of after all; so I will make bold to make all these several assumptions.

Such being the case, I have no doubt that, loving your dog and loving your fowls too, you deeply regretted you knew of no way of punishing the former adequately, short of beating him to death.

For beat your dog as you may, you cannot bring your poultry to life again. Besides which, the Bible expressly says that God desires not the death of a sinner, but his repentance.

You object that in this precept God was not thinking about dogs. I say you are puffed up with the insolence of your supposed human superiority.

I firmly believe God paid just as much attention as He did to man to every animal He endowed with

life, from the tiniest insect to the elephant, from the humming-bird to the eagle.

However, I will make some concession to your prejudices, reader, and allow that *perhaps* God implanted a special liability to be tempted in this particular direction in the dog, which of all beasts is the one whose instinct comes nearest to human intelligence.

Perhaps we might even venture on the proposition that some dogs have more instinct than some men have intelligence.

Remember what Michelet said so pleasantly: "Dogs are candidates for humanity."

Finally, if the point is contested, we can allege this convincing proof—that dogs go mad, and bite.

This settled, let us to our story.

I own a dog, and I once owned fowls.

There! just think what it is to be a dramatic author, and with what an artful touch a dramatic author can broach a subject! "I own a dog, and I once owned fowls!" Why, that single sentence, those nine simple words, imply a whole catastrophe in the past, and give the actual state of things here and now into the bargain.

I own a dog—yes, I have one still; my dog, therefore, is alive. *I once owned* fowls, but I do so no longer; ergo, my fowls are dead.

Nay! it is plain that, if you have any powers of deduction at all,—even though I had not told you, perhaps rather prematurely,—by means of the phrase "I own a dog, I once owned fowls," you would know perfectly well not merely that my dog is alive and my poultry dead, but be able to guess, into the bargain, that in all probability it was my dog killed my fowls.

So you see there is a whole tragedy implicit in the words: *I own a dog, I once owned fowls!*

If I could ever hope to be elected a member of the Academy, I should enjoy the certainty that one day at any rate my panegyric would be pronounced by my successor; and lauded by a great noble or a great poet of the future, a Noailles or a future Viennet, I could fall asleep in calm reliance on this one sentence: *I own a dog, and I once owned fowls*, confident that the fine implications involved would not be lost on an admiring posterity.

But, alas! I shall never join the Immortal Forty! A fellow-Academician will never pronounce my panegyric after I am dead!

The simplest plan, therefore, is for me to do it for myself while I am still alive.

Now you are aware, dear reader, or possibly you are not aware, that in dramatic art everything depends on the *preparation*, the working-up.

To introduce and make known the *dramatis personæ* is one of the surest ways of forcing the reader to be interested in them.

To force—it is a hard word, I know, but it is the proper technical expression; we must always *force* the reader to be interested in some person or some thing.

Only there are several different means of arriving at this result.

Remember Walter Scott,—well, Walter Scott had a way of his own of attracting interest to his characters, one which, though it was with a very few exceptions always the same and of a kind to strike one at the first blush as very extraordinary, nevertheless proved highly successful.

His way was to be tiresome, deadly tiresome, often for half the first volume, sometimes for the whole of it.

But, in the course of this volume he was bringing his personages on the scene, and giving so minute and

detailed a description of their personal appearance, their moral character, their habits and idiosyncrasies, the reader learnt so exactly how they dressed and walked and talked, that when at the beginning of volume ii. one of these individuals found himself in some danger or emergency, you could not help exclaiming—

"Ah, dear! that poor gentleman who wore an apple-green coat, and limped as he walked, and lisped in speaking, how ever is he going to get out of this difficulty?"

And you were quite surprised, after being bored to death for half a volume or a whole volume, sometimes even for a volume and a half, you were quite astonished to find yourself deeply interested in the gentleman who lisped in speaking, who limped as he walked, and who wore an apple-green coat.

You may possibly observe, reader—

"This method, sir, which I see you commend so highly, is the one you follow yourself, is it?"

In the first place, I do not commend it; I only explain and describe and discuss it. Secondly, my own is precisely the opposite.

"Ah! so you have a method of your own?" Mr. This or Mr. That will ask me, with a pretty air of polished sarcasm.

"Certainly—and why not, my good friends?"

Well, then, here is *my* method: I give it you for what it is worth.

Only I am bound to begin by telling you I think it is a bad one.

"But," you naturally object, "if your way is a bad one, why employ it?"

Because one is not always in a position to employ or not to employ a method at will; and sometimes, I strongly suspect, it is the method uses us rather than we the method.

Men deem they have ideas; I have a shrewd notion myself it is ideas often possess men. There is many an idea has used up two or three generations of mankind and, before working itself out, is going to use up three or four more.

Anyhow, whether it is I own my method or my method me, here it is, such as it is:—

To begin by being interesting, instead of beginning by being tiresome; to begin with action, instead of beginning with preparation for action; to describe the characters after having brought them on the stage, instead of bringing them on the stage after describing them.

Well, you will likely enough say at the first go off—

"Really, I see nothing so very perilous about this way of going to work."

All I can say to that is: you are mistaken. In reading a book or watching a play,—comedy, tragedy, theatrical piece of any sort—any *Schauspiel*, as they say in German,—we must always be bored more or less.

There is no fire without smoke, no sunlight without shadow. Well, boredom, ennui, is the shadow, the smoke, in this case.

Now experience has shown this much: it is better to be bored at the start than the finish.

More than that: some of my fellow novelists and dramatists, uncertain which of the two plans to adopt, have chosen that of boring the reader all through the romance or the spectator all through the play.

And they have been quite successful; while I, I have found my method pretty nearly fatal to me, consisting as it does in being amusing at the start!

Consider my first acts, look at my first volumes; the pains I have always taken to make them as amusing as possible have frequently been prejudicial to

the four others where a play has been concerned, the fifteen or twenty others where a novel has been in question.

Witness the prologue of *Caligula*, which killed that tragedy, and the first act of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*, which came near ruining that comedy.

Once people are amused in the first act or the first volume, they expect to be amused all through —and it is hard, extremely hard, well-nigh impossible, to be always amusing.

On the contrary, when ennui is the order of the day in the first act or first volume, a change becomes highly desirable—and then the reader or spectator, as the case may be, is endlessly grateful for whatever is done with a view to bringing that about.

The prologue alone of *Caligula* contained stuff enough to ensure the success of half a dozen tragedies such as *Clovis* or *Artaxerxes*, such as *Le Cid d'Andalousie*, or *Pertinax*, or *Julien dans les Gaules*.

But we should give only a little bit at a time, and above all not at the beginning!

A novel or a play is like a dinner. Your guests are hungry; they want to eat, and don't much care what they eat so long as their appetite is satisfied.

Give them a dish of good plain onion soup. Some will make a face, perhaps; but all will take a plateful, never fear. Next, give them pork and pickled cabbage—any coarse food you please; provided there's plenty of it, they ask nothing better, and dine without a grumble, finally leaving table with the words, "Well, it wasn't very delicate fare, to be sure, but, 'pon my word, I've dined, anyway."

That is why authors are often successful who are always tiresome, from the beginning of the novel or play to the end.

This method is the least usual and the most uncertain; I do not advise its adoption.

Now for the two other systems—and first Walter Scott's.

You serve, as at the dinner just described, onion soup to begin with, pickled cabbage, and common coarse dishes. But next come game, partridges and pheasants, or perhaps poultry, say a goose, and lo! everybody begins to applaud, and forget the unappetising beginning of the meal, and declare they have dined like Lucullus.

My own particular system is the worst of all—I said so before.

I serve up my partridges and pheasants, my turbot and lobster at once, and even my pine-apples, which I do not reserve for dessert; then later on you come to the jugged hare and Gruyère cheese, and make a wry face. Indeed, I am very lucky if you don't go and cry on the housetops that my kitchen is a thousand yards below the lowest suburban cook-shop and the level of the sea.

However, I begin to see, reader mine, that I have wandered a long way from the dog I own and the fowls I once owned.

I really think to-day I have been using Walter Scott's method.

Well, we ought to try everything, you know.

CHAPTER II

ENUMERATION OF MY PETS

WELL, then, we had better go on in the fashion of the Wizard of the North—that is to say, begin by introducing our characters.

But, to make them adequately known, the reader must be so good as to hark back seven or eight years, at which date he will find me residing at Monte Cristo.

Now, how did Monte Cristo come to be so called? *I* did not give it the name; I could never have been so foolish and conceited.

It was one day I was expecting Mélingue to dinner with his wife and two children. Monte Cristo was only just built, and as yet had no name.

I had explained as well as I could the situation to my guests, but not so accurately as to enable the family to find their way there on foot.

At Le Pecq they took a conveyance.

"To M. Dumas'," Madame Mélingue told the driver.

"M. Dumas'—where's that?" the man asked.

"Why, on the Marly road."

"There are two Marly roads—the lower road and the upper."

"The deuce there are!"

"Well, which is it?"

"I don't know."

"But come, has not M. Dumas' house got a name?"

"A name? why, of course; it's the Château de Monte Cristo."

So off they started to look for the Château de Monte Cristo—and what's more, they found it.

It was Madame Mélingue told me the story. Ever after M. Dumas' house was known as the Château de Monte Cristo.

It is only right that, when posterity inquires into the affair, it should hear the true account of the matter.

Well, in those days I lived at Monte Cristo, and, barring the visitors who came to see me, I lived there alone.

I love solitude. For those who can appreciate her charms, solitude is the most loving of mistresses.

The first necessity to a man who works and works hard is solitude. Society is the distraction of the body; love the occupation of the heart; solitude the religion of the soul.

At the same time I do not love a lonely solitude. I prefer the solitude of the terrestrial paradise—that is to say, a solitude peopled with animals. I adore all animals—except those of the human species.

As a mere boy, I was the greatest birds'-nester, the most inveterate bird-catcher in all the broad forest of Villers-Cotterets. See my Memoirs *passim*, and the life and adventures of Ange Pitou.

The consequence was that, in my solitude at Monte Cristo, without boasting either the innocence or the costume of Adam, I possessed a Garden of Eden in miniature.

I had—not all at once, but one after the other—five dogs: to wit—*Pritchard*, *Phanos*, *Turk*, *Caro*, and *Tambo*. I had a tame vulture—*Diogenes*. I had

three monkeys—one bearing the name of a celebrated translator, another that of an illustrious novelist, and the third—a lady ape—that of a successful actress.

The reader will readily understand my motives for not mentioning these names, which had been mostly given in reference to some detail of the private life or some physical peculiarity of the original.

Now, as a great novelist has said,—I would tell you which, but I really am not quite sure,—"private life must be held sacred."

So we will, if you please, call the translator *Potich*; the novelist, the *Last of the Laidmanoirs*; and the she-monkey, *Mademoiselle Desgarcins*.

I had, moreover, a big blue and red parakeet called *Buvat*, and a green and yellow one known as *Papa Éverard*.

I had a cat named *Mysouff*, a golden pheasant named *Lucullus*, and a cock named *Cæsar*.

Such is an accurate enumeration, I think, of all the animals inhabiting Monte Cristo.

Add a peacock and pea-hen, a dozen fowls, and a pair of guinea-fowl, creatures I only set down here for the sake of completeness, their individuality being nil or next to it.

Needless to say also that I make no mention of the stray dogs which used to come in *en passant* as they went by on the Marly road, upper or lower, and make or renew acquaintance with Pritchard, Phanos, Turk, Caro, or Tambo. In strict accordance with the laws of Arab hospitality,—which, by the bye, the owner of Monte Cristo was often blamed for following too implicitly,—all these were entertained for longer or shorter periods, the length of their stay depending solely and entirely on the fancy, caprice, necessities, or engagements of these four-footed guests.

And now, since the destiny of several of the creatures residing, about 1850, in the Eden of Monte Cristo is more or less closely connected with the fortunes of other pets at present occupying the courtyard and garden of the house I now occupy in the Rue d'Amsterdam, we will conclude this long list of dogs and monkeys and birds with a brief enumeration of my new favourites.

A fighting-cock, by name *Marlborough.*

Two sea-gulls, known as *M. and Madame Denis.*

A heron, named *Charles the Fifth.*

A bitch, called *Flora.*

A dog, originally called *Catinat,* but subsequently renamed *Catiline.*

It is the latter beast to which I apply the characteristic phrase I am so proud of having invented—"The dog I own, and the fowls I once owned."

However, before coming to *this* story, which I naturally enough keep for the last, as being the most thrilling and dramatic, we have a long talk before us, dear reader, our subject-matter being nothing more nor less than the detailed biographies of *Pritchard, Phanos, Turk, Caro, Tambo, Diogenes, Potich, the Last of the Laidmanoirs, Mademoiselle Desgarcins, Mysouff, Buvat, Papa Éverard, Lucullus,* and *Cæsar.*

We will begin with Pritchard, whose noble qualities and high breeding well deserve this honour.

CHAPTER III

A SCOTCH POINTER

PRITCHARD was a Scotch *pointer.*

You, all of you, dear readers of the sterner sex, know what in sporting language a pointer is; but it may be some of my fair readers may be less familiar with canine nomenclature and may need information, and for their sakes we give the explanations that follow.

A pointer is a dog which, as its name imports, points. Good pointers come from England, the very best from Scotland.

This is the way the pointer goes to work. Instead of running almost under the gun, as most sporting dogs do,—brach-hounds, spaniels, or water-spaniels,—he takes a wide sweep and hunts at a hundred yards, or even two or three hundred on occasion, ahead of his master.

But, the instant he comes upon game, a good pointer stops dead and stands as still as Cephalus' dog, till his master actually treads on his tail.

For the benefit of any of our readers, male or female, who may not be well up in the Heathen Mythology, we will observe that Cephalus' dog was turned into stone while chasing a fox. Some people always want to know everything, so we will mention, further, that the dog's name was *Lailaps.*

"But what was the fox's name?"

Ah! you think you have me there! Not a bit of it; the Greek word *alopex* means fox. Well, this fox was *the* fox *par excellence*, and just as Rome was called *the town*, *urbs*, so this fox was called *the fox*.

And truly he deserved his pre-eminence. Picture a giant fox, sent by Themis to punish the Thebans for their offences against her, to which they were bound to sacrifice every month a human victim—twelve a year, only two less than the Minotaur exacted. This would seem to imply a fox standing only four or five inches lower than a bull—a very fine height for a fox!

"But, if Lailaps was turned into stone, the fox got away from him?"

Never fear, fair readers; the fox was turned into stone at the same moment as the dog.

If you ever go to Thebes, they will show you both of them, trying their best,—they have been trying for three thousand years or so now,—the fox to get away from the dog, the dog to catch the fox.

Where were we? Oh yes, we were talking about pointers, whose bounden duty it is, having made a point, to stop as still and steady as a granite dog.

In England, an aristocratic country, where sport is pursued in parks of three or four thousand acres surrounded by walls or palings, swarming with red-legged partridges and pheasants, the surfaces picturesquely variegated with fields of clover, buckwheat, colza, and lucerne,—which they are careful not to cut, so that the game may always have covert,—the pointers can stop where and when they please and stand as stock-still as stone dogs. The game will always keep covert.

But in a democratic country like France, divided up among five or six million owners, where every peasant

has a double-barrelled gun hanging over the mantel-shelf, where harvesting operations, impatiently looked forward to by the grower, begin punctually to the moment and are often all over before the opening of the shooting season, a pointer is the very devil.

Now Pritchard, as I have already said, was a pointer.

But, knowing how disastrous the use of such a dog is in France, how in the world, you will naturally ask, did I come to have a pointer?

Ah! good Lord! and how does it come about a man has a bad wife, tell me that; or a false friend who cheats him; or a gun that bursts in your fingers —and this for all our being so knowing in women and men and guns? Why, circumstances, circumstances, and the inevitable haphazards of life!

The fact is, I had gone to Ham to pay a visit to a prisoner in that historic fortress for whom I felt a sincere respect. Indeed, I always feel great respect for prisoners and exiles. Does not Sophocles tell us: "Honour calamity; calamity comes from the gods"?

On his side, the prisoner in question was much attached to me. We quarrelled later, . . . but that is another story.

Well, I spent some days at Ham, in the course of which I naturally saw something of the special Commissary of the Government—a charming gentleman, by name M. Lerat. He showed me many flattering attentions, taking me on one occasion to the Fair of Chauny, where I bought a pair of horses, and on another to the Castle of Coucy, where I climbed to the top of the great donjon.

Finally, on the last day of my stay, having heard me mention that I was in want of a sporting dog—

"Ah!" he informed me, "I am delighted to say

I can give you a real handsome present! One of my friends, who lives in Scotland, has sent me a dog of royal breed; I will give him you."

How refuse a gift offered so gracefully, even though the animal was a pointer?

"Bring Pritchard here," he went on, turning to his little girls, two charming children of ten or twelve.

Pritchard was duly introduced. He was a dog with prick ears, or almost so, mustard-coloured eyes, a long greyish white coat, waving a magnificent feathery plume at the end of his tail.

With the exception of this ornament, he was an ill-looking beast enough. But I have read in the *Selectæ e profanis scriptoribus* that we should not judge people by appearances, and in *Don Quixote* that "the habit does not make the monk." So I asked myself why a rule applicable to men should not be equally so to dogs? and trusting to Cervantes and Seneca, I received the present now made me with open arms.

M. Lerat appeared even more pleased to give me his dog than I was to receive him; it is the mark of kind hearts to care less to get than to give.

"The children," he told me, with a laugh, "call him Pritchard. But if you don't like the name, you are at liberty to give him any other you choose."

I had nothing to say against the name; indeed, if anybody had an objection to make, it seemed to me it was the dog. But Pritchard said nothing, so *Pritchard* he remained.

I returned to Saint-Germain,—I had not taken up my abode as yet at Monte Cristo at the time I speak of,—richer—or poorer, if you prefer it—by a dog and two horses than when I left home.

Perhaps, under the circumstances, *poorer* is the better word, for one of my nags had the glanders and the

other strained himself badly. The consequence was I had to get rid of them both for a hundred and fifty francs, and the vet. declared I was well out of the business. They had cost me two thousand francs.

As for Pritchard, in whom you are mainly interested, we shall see what became of him.

CHAPTER IV

"THEY'VE GOT THE JAY!"

ACCORDING to the most likely calculations, Pritchard might be nine or ten months old—past the age when dogs begin their education. The great thing was to select a good teacher.

I had an old friend in the forest of Le Vésinet. He was called Vatrin; indeed I may say he *is* called, for I hope and believe he is still in the land of the living.

Our acquaintance dated from the early days of my boyhood; his father had been keeper of the division of the forest of Villers-Cotterets over which my father had the right of shooting. Vatrin was a lad of twelve or fifteen then, and ever after he retained a heroically exaggerated mental picture of *the General*—so he always spoke of my father.

To give an instance. One day my father was thirsty, and stopped at Keeper Vatrin's door to ask for a glass of water.

Vatrin senior gave the General a glass of wine instead, and when he had drunk it, the admiring fellow actually put the glass on a pedestal of black oak and covered it with a glass shade, as if it had been a sacred relic.

When he died he left the glass by will to his son. To this day, most likely, it forms the chief ornament

of the old forest-keeper's mantelshelf. For the son in turn has grown old—though that in no way prevented his still being, the last time I saw him, one of the most active head keepers of the forest of Saint-Germain.

Vatrin is perhaps fifteen or sixteen years my senior. When we were both of us young together, the difference was more noticeable and important than it is nowadays.

He was a tall, well-grown boy when I was still a little chap, and I used to follow his lead with all the simple admiration of childhood on bird-catching and bird-liming expeditions.

The truth is, Vatrin was one of the cleverest snarers I have ever known.

More than once, when I have been telling my Parisian friends, male or female, of this eminently picturesque form of sport known as liming, and after I had done my very best to make them understand how it is done, one of my auditors has ended by saying—

"Well, I must say I should enjoy seeing the thing in action."

Then I would ask the company to fix a day, and this settled, I would write a line to Vatrin—

"My dear Vatrin,—Get a tree ready. We will sleep such and such a night at Collinet's, and next morning at five o'clock we will be at your service."

You know, of course, who Collinet is—the landlord of the *Pavillon Henri IV* at Saint-Germain, one of the best cooks in creation.

Whenever you go to Saint-Germain, ask him to give you *côtelettes à la béarnaise.* Use my name, and tell me afterwards how you liked them!

Well, in due course Vatrin would turn up at

Collinet's, and with a wink that was peculiar to himself—

"It's all right," he would say.

"The tree is ready?"

"Rather."

"And the jay?"

"We've got the jay."

"Up and at 'em, then! Hurrah!"

Then, turning to the company—

"Ladies and gentlemen," I would observe oratorically, "here's good news! They've got the jay!"

Nine times out of ten nobody knew what I meant.

Yet it was an all-important announcement; it meant the certainty of good sport to-morrow. The moment they had the jay, a good morning's work was assured.

A word of explanation to make the full importance of this apparent.

La Fontaine, whom folks will call *the worthy La Fontaine*, just as they speak of Plutarch as *the worthy Plutarch*, has written a fable about the jay, which he entitles, "The Jay that dressed in Peacock's feathers."

Well, that's all pure calumny—nothing more nor less! The jay, one of the most mischievous and ill-conditioned of birds, never conceived the notion, I'll swear, of doing anything so silly as La Fontaine says. He never did such a thing, and it's a hundred to one never thought of such a thing.

It would have been far better for him if he had, instead of doing what he does; he would have brought far fewer enemies about his ears.

What is it the jay does, then? You know the myth of Saturn, who used to devour his children? Well, the jay is a better father than Saturn; he only eats other people's, or rather other birds', children.

Now you can understand the virulent hatred vowed

against the jay by all the smaller members of the feathered tribe—tomtits, siskins, chaffinches, goldfinches, nightingales, warblers, linnets, bullfinches, and red-breasts, whose eggs or chicks the jay gobbles up.

They all hate him like death; but none of them is strong enough to tackle a jay.

Only, let any misfortune, any accident, any disaster befall a jay, and all the birds of the countryside are in ecstasies.

Well, it is a misfortune, an accident, a terrible disaster for a jay to fall into the hands of a bird-snarer, while at the same time it is a veritable stroke of luck for a bird-catcher to get hold of a jay. For when once the snarer has prepared his tree—that is to say, has thinned the leaves, made incisions in the boughs, and fixed limed twigs in these; when beneath the tree he has built his hut, well covered up with broom and heather; when, alone or with his companions, he has taken up his position inside it, instead of being obliged to imitate by means of a leaf of couch grass or a bit of silk, the song, or rather the cry, of the different birds, he has only, if he has a jay, to pull the bird out of his pocket and twitch out a feather from its tail.

The jay gives a sharp cry, which rings through the forest.

Instantly all the tomtits, chaffinches, siskins, bullfinches, warblers, red-breasts, nightingales, goldfinches, red and grey linnets, for miles round give a simultaneous start and listen with all their ears.

Then the operator twitches another feather from the jay's wing, and the bird gives another cry.

Thereupon fierce rejoicing among all the feathered tribe; it is plain some calamity has befallen the common enemy.

What can it be? where is it? which way? We must hurry up to see!

The bird-catcher pulls a third feather from his captive's wing, and again the cry of pain is heard.

"Ah! there it is! This way, this way!" chorus the little birds, one and all—and they fly in flocks, in hosts, towards the tree from which those three shrill outcries have come.

Now, as the tree is armed with limed twigs, every bird that lights on it is a bird caught.

That's the reason why I would announce to my guests, as I introduced Vatrin: "Ladies and gentlemen, great news! They've got the jay!"

You see, dear readers, everything is explained in my stories; only you must give me time—especially when I am following Walter Scott's method.

Well, it was to this worthy fellow Vatrin's place—I have borrowed his name, by the bye, to bestow it on the hero of one of my romances, already published: *Catherine Blum*, to wit—that I now took Pritchard.

CHAPTER V

VATRIN AND HIS PIPE

VATRIN looked the dog up and down with a depreciatory look.

"H'm! another *Englishman*!" he growled.

But, before we go further, you must make Vatrin's acquaintance.

He is a man of five feet six, lean, bony, sharp-featured. There's never a bramble bush his legs, equipped with long leather gaiters, won't stride through, never a coppice of ten years' growth his elbows, as sharp as a carpenter's square, won't cleave.

He is taciturn as a rule, as men are who are used to going the rounds at night. When dealing with his under-keepers, who look upon him as an infallible oracle, he limits himself to a wink or a wave of the hand—and they perfectly understand.

One of the ornaments—I should rather say one of the features—of his face is his pipe. Whether it ever had a stem I cannot say, but I have never seen it under any other aspect than as a cutty.

The reason is plain enough—Vatrin smokes incessantly. Now, to make way through the tangled undergrowth, he must have a pipe of a special sort, a pipe that does not project beyond the tip of his nose, to the end pipe and nose may work together in concert to make a passage for the face.

By dint of always pressing the pipe-stem, such as it

is, Vatrin's teeth—those that are so employed—have been worn into a half-circle above and below. Thus the stem is caught as it were in a vice, from which it cannot move, once it has been inserted. Vatrin's pipe never quits his mouth save to bend gracefully over the edge of his bacca pouch and be filled from the contents, like the Princess Nausicaa's amphora at the fountain or Rachel's water-jar at the well.

Once stuffed full, Vatrin's pipe at once resumes its place in the vice. Then the old head keeper pulls from his pocket his flint, steel, and tinder; for Vatrin does not hold with new-fangled ideas, and speaks contemptuously of *chemical contrivances*. Then he lights his pipe, and till it is finished to the very end, the smoke issues from his mouth as regularly and almost as abundantly as the steam from a steam-engine.

"Vatrin," I told him one day, "when you can't walk any more, you will only have to get a couple of wheels fitted, and your head will serve as locomotive to your body."

"I shall always be able to walk," Vatrin answered, in his simple way—and he spoke only the truth; the Wandering Jew was not better provided in the way of walking capabilities.

Needless to mention that Vatrin replies to a question without requiring to displace his pipe. His pipe is a sort of vegetable growth in his jaws, a black coral grafted on to his teeth. The only difference it makes is that he speaks with a sort of hissing articulation peculiar to himself, caused by the limited space his teeth allow the sound to issue by.

Vatrin has three ways, three degrees, of paying his respects.

For me, for instance, he contents himself with lifting his hat and replacing it on his head.

For a superior, he removes his hat and carries it in his hand.

For a Prince, he removes his hat from his head and his pipe from his mouth.

To take his pipe from his mouth is the highest mark of consideration Vatrin can pay.

But when this is done, you must not suppose he relaxes his teeth by a single fraction of an inch. Just the opposite; the two jaws, having nothing now to separate them, come together as if moved by a spring, and instead of the hissing sound diminishing, it is increased, the sound now having only the small opening due to the pipe-stem to come out at.

Moreover, a fine sportsman, whether after fur or feathers, hardly ever missing his shot, and bringing down snipe as easily as you and I can a pheasant; knowing every haunt and run and trace of game; telling you at a glance all particulars of the wild-boar you have tracked down, whether a yearling, a "rogue," a solitary, or a four-year-old; distinguishing the sow, and informing you, by the impress of the hoof, whether she is with pig and how many the litter will be; in a word, everything a man can wish to know before attacking the quarry.

Well, Vatrin looked at Pritchard, and said, "H'm! another *Englishman*, eh?"

Pritchard was weighed in the balance and found wanting. Vatrin was as little enamoured with modern progress in the matter of dogs as of the means of striking a light. The utmost concession he had been able to bring himself to make was to advance from the old-fashioned French brach-hound, the dear old grey and brown dog our fathers swore by, to the double-nosed English setter bitch, black and tan.

But the pointer he could not abide at any price.

So he raised all sorts of difficulties about undertaking Pritchard's education.

He even went so far as to offer to give me a dog of his own, one of those faithful old servants a sportsman only parts with to his father or his son.

I refused; it was Pritchard I wanted, and not some other dog.

Vatrin heaved a sigh, offered me a glass of wine in the General's glass, and agreed to keep Pritchard.

This he did accordingly, but not so successfully as to prevent that animal being back at the Villa Médicis within two hours.

I have mentioned the fact that at this date I had not yet settled at Monte Cristo, but I forgot to say I was then living at the Villa Médicis.

Pritchard received a warm welcome—warm in one sense; he got a good thrashing, and Michel, my gardener, gate-keeper, and general factotum, was ordered to take him back to Vatrin's.

Michel did so, and asked particulars as to how he had escaped. Pritchard, it seems, had been penned in with the rest of the keeper's dogs, but had jumped over the palisade, and bolted back to the house of his predilection.

The railing in question was four feet high, and Vatrin had never known a dog leap so high. But then he had never owned a pointer.

Next morning, when the front door was opened at the Villa Médicis, Pritchard was found squatted on the steps.

He received a second thrashing, and once again Michel was ordered to take him back to the keeper's.

The latter put an old collar round the dog's neck and chained him up. Michel returned, announcing this harsh but necessary precaution. Vatrin, for his part,

sent word I should see no more of Pritchard till his training was complete.

Next day, as I sat working in a summer-house lying at the very end of the garden, I heard a noise of furious barking.

It was Pritchard fighting a huge Pyrenean boar-hound, which a neighbour of mine, M. Challamel, had made me a present of.

I quite forgot, by the bye, dear readers, to tell you about this animal—the Pyrenean hound. You must allow me to come back to him in a subsequent chapter. Possibly my forgetfulness was premeditated—a stroke of art, in fact; for it will likely enough bring into prominence one of my pet virtues—my readiness to forgive injuries.

Pritchard, after being rescued by Michel from Mouton's jaws (the Pyrenean hound was called *Mouton* (sheep), not because of any mildness of disposition—in that case the name would have been singularly inappropriate—but on account of his white coat, which was as fine and fleecy as wool), Pritchard, I say, after being rescued by Michel from Mouton's tender mercies, got a third thrashing, and was reconducted for the third time to Vatrin's domicile.

Pritchard had eaten his collar! Vatrin often asked himself the question how the animal contrived to perform this remarkable feat, but he could never arrive at a satisfactory answer.

This time the dog was shut up in a sort of wood-house, whence he could not very well escape without eating either the wall or the door.

He tried both these expedients, and presumably finding the latter less indigestible than the former, he ate the door, like the father of *The Captive* in M. d'Arlincourt's play—

"Mon père, en ma prison, seul à manger m'apporte (a mangé ma porte)."

The next day but one, at dinner-time, lo! Pritchard marching into the eating-room, his magnificent tail waving in the wind, his yellow eyes crying with joy.

It was too much: this time he was not beaten, and was not sent back again.

Vatrin's arrival was awaited, to hold a council of war and adjudge Pritchard a deserter for the fourth time.

CHAPTER VI

PRITCHARD AND THE CUTLET

NEXT morning Vatrin arrived with the first streak of dawn.

"A blackguard! Did you ever see such a blackguard?" he began the instant he saw me.

The man was so excited and angry he clean forgot to say good morning even.

"Vatrin," I said, "I notice one thing—your cutty is shorter than it ever was before."

"I should think so indeed; that blackguard of a Pritchard puts me in such a rage I've broken off the stem three times over between my teeth, and my wife has been obliged to wind it round with thread. Else he would ruin me in pipe-stems, the good-for-nothing varmint!"

"Do you hear, Pritchard, what they're saying about you?" I said to the dog, who was sitting on his tail in the middle of the floor.

Pritchard heard me, but presumably he failed to understand the gravity of the charge, for he only looked at me with his most affectionate leer, sweeping the boards meantime with his tail.

"Ah!" went on Vatrin, "if the General had had a dog like him——!"

"What would *he* have done, Vatrin?" I asked. "We will do what he would have done."

"He would," said Vatrin, "he would have——"

Then, stopping to think—

"He would have done nothing," he resumed; "for the General, look you, was the most good-tempered man God ever made."

"Well, what shall *we* do, Vatrin?"

"Devil fly away with me if I know!" said Vatrin. "If I persist in keeping the blackguard, he'll tear the house down; if I give him back to you . . . But there, I don't mean to be bested by a dog; that's a bit too humiliating, mind you."

I saw he had reached the last stage of exasperation, and I thought it best to say something conciliatory.

"Listen here, Vatrin," I told him. "I'm going to put on my shooting boots and leggings. We'll go down to Le Vésinet and take a turn round your preserves, and see, the two of us together, if it's worth while taking more trouble with the blackguard, as you call him."

"I only call him as he deserves. He's a brigand, I say; his name ought not to be Pritchard at all, but Cartouche or Mandrin, Poulailler or Artifaille!"

Vatrin named the four greatest robbers whose exploits and adventures had beguiled his youthful leisure.

"Pooh! pooh!" I told Vatrin. "Let us go on calling him Pritchard. Come, admit even Pritchard had his merits—indeed has them still."

"Very good!" muttered Vatrin. "I only said that because I never knew Pritchard in the past, and I do know the other dogs."

I shouted for Michel. "Michel," I said, "tell them to bring me my shooting boots and leggings. We are going to Le Vésinet to see what Pritchard is good for."

"Well, well," Michel replied, "Monsieur will find he won't have so much fault to find as he thinks."

Michel had always shown a sneaking fondness for

the dog. The real fact is Michel is a bit of a poacher, and Pritchard, as we shall see later on, was a true poacher's dog.

We went down to Le Vésinet, Michel holding Pritchard on a leash, Vatrin and myself devising, not, like Amadis of Gaul, doughty deeds of war and love, but deeds of sporting prowess.

At the turn of the hill—

"Look, look, Michel!" I exclaimed. "There's a dog so like Pritchard."

"Why, where?"

"Down yonder, on the bridge, five hundred yards ahead of us."

"It's very true, 'pon my word," said Vatrin.

The resemblance appeared so striking to Michel that he glanced behind him.

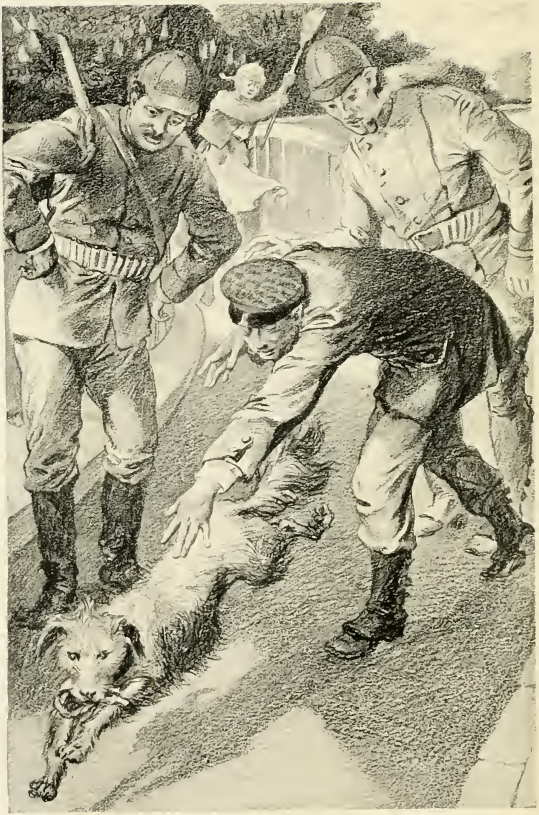
Pritchard was gone; not a trace of him to be seen. The animal had quietly severed the leash with his cutting teeth, and, making a detour, had got in front of the party.

It was Pritchard swaggering there on the bridge of Le Pecq, looking out through the openings in the parapet to see the water flow by.

"The skunk!" cried Michel, for even he was disgusted. Astonishing, by the bye, what a number of strange names Pritchard had the faculty of calling to the lips of his two-legged friends. "I say, Vatrin," I observed, "if we don't know what else to make of Pritchard, we will make him a language master."

"You'll make a rogue and vagabond of him," growled Vatrin, "and nothing else, I tell you. Do you see where he's going? Look, look!"

"Vatrin, do not abuse poor Pritchard for his good qualities; you will have quite enough to do, I assure you, if you attend to his bad ones only. I'll tell you



IN HIS JAWS HE HELD A CUTLET HE HAD JUST FILCHED FROM THE GRIDIRON

where he is going: he's going to bid good morning to my friend Corrège and eat his breakfast for him, unless the maid keeps a sharp look-out."

And so it turned out: another moment, and Pritchard darted out of the station of Le Pecq, hotly pursued by a woman armed with a broom.

In his jaws he held a cutlet he had just filched from the gridiron.

"Monsieur Dumas," the woman was shouting, "Monsieur Dumas, stop your dog!"

Accordingly we blocked Pritchard's way.

"Stop him, stop him!" vociferated the woman.

Stop him indeed! As well try to stop Boreas carrying off the nymph Orithyia. Pritchard shot between Michel and me like a flash of lightning.

"It seems the scoundrel likes his meat bleeding raw."

"Mutton bleating, veal bleeding, pork rotten," quoted Vatrin sententiously, as he gazed after Pritchard, who disappeared round a bend in the hill.

"Well," I remarked to the keeper, "you don't know yet whether he can retrieve, but at any rate he can deceive."

By this time the woman had joined us, and wanted to go on with the pursuit of Pritchard.

"But, my good woman," I expostulated, "you will only waste your time; by the time you catch up with the dog, if ever you do, the cutlet will be far enough, I imagine."

"You think so?" said the woman, leaning on her broom to recover breath.

"I don't think—I'm sure of it."

"Then you can boast of feeding a fine thief."

"This morning, my good woman, it's you are feeding him, not I."

"Yes, that's true, that's true . . . at least M. Corrège is. Well, now, what will M. Corrège say, I wonder?"

"He will say what Michel said just now: 'It seems Pritchard likes his meat bleeding raw.'"

"Yes, but he'll be anything but pleased, and I shall have to pay for it."

"Listen here: I'm going to tell him to come and have breakfast at the Villa Médicis."

"All the same, if he goes on as he has begun, he'll come to a bad end, your dog will. . . . I say no more —he'll come to a bad end!"—and the dame pointed her broom handle in the direction in which Pritchard had vanished.

So nothing was wanting to add impressiveness to the witch's prophecy, not even the broomstick!

CHAPTER VII

A GLASS OF WINE

THUS we stood on the bridge of Le Pecq, Vatrin, Michel, and I, our eyes fixed on the particular point of the horizon where Pritchard had disappeared, while the woman held her broom pointing in the same direction in an attitude of malediction. . . .

If a painter had wished to draw the subject of a picture from the narrative I am telling you, this is precisely the point he would have chosen for illustration.

In the foreground he would have placed a picturesquely grouped quartette; in the middle distance, Pritchard in full flight, cutlet in mouth—he would be bound to show the dog, to make the scene intelligible; in the background and closing the horizon, the pretty town of Saint-Germain, built semicircularly on the side of the hill, and showing conspicuously, as the first object to meet the traveller's eye, the famous Pavilion where Anne of Austria was brought to bed, and the window from which Louis XIII, beaming with pride and satisfaction, showed his son, Louis XIV, to the people.

Vatrin was the first to recover the power of speech.

"Oh, the blackguard! the blackguard!" he groaned.

"Well, my dear Vatrin," I told him, "I think our sport is finished for the day."

"Why so?" asked Michel.

"Why, because we were to take Pritchard with us, and we have lost Pritchard——"

"So Monsieur doesn't believe he'll come back again?"

"Egad, Michel! I only judge by what I should do myself. I know, if I were he, I should take good care not to."

"Monsieur does not know Pritchard. He's a dog devoid of shame."

"Then you advise, Michel——?"

"That we walk on quietly to M. Vatrin's. There we can eat a mouthful of bread and cheese and drink a glass of wine, and I shall be surprised if in ten minutes or so you don't feel Pritchard's tail tickling your legs."

"So that's it, eh?" Vatrin assented hospitably. "Well, as luck will have it, my wife had a bit of veal cooked yesterday, and I've got a nice little Loiret wine—it's my wife's native district, you know—I think you'll like it . . . I remember you're fond of veal."

"I was so young when you knew me first, dear old Vatrin, I could not hide any of my failings from you, if I wanted to. But about Corrège?"

"We'll pick him up as we go by; when there's enough for two, there's enough for three."

"Yes, but we shall be four."

"Well, and what of the fowls? do you think they've left off laying? We'll have an omelette."

"Bravo, Vatrin! I'm in for a good time, I can see. Hurrah for the Loiret! hurrah for the veal and the omelette!"

"To say nothing of an excellent cup of coffee. Ah! you shall see what good milk's like."

"Good, Vatrin, good; so come along."

"Come along by all means. . . . But confound that blackguard of a dog!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"The matter! Why, I've let my pipe out. Another like him to train, and upon my word of honour they'd drive me stupid the two of them!"

Vatrin pulled out his flint and tinder, laid on with the steel, and relit his pipe.

Then we set off again. We had not gone twenty yards when Michel nudged me with his elbow. I looked at him, and he signed to me to look behind me.

Half Pritchard's body was visible poking round the corner of the wall he had disappeared behind. He was watching what we were after, and most likely trying hard to guess our thoughts.

"Pretend not to see him," whispered Michel, "and he will come after us."

And so it was; I made as though I could see nothing, and Pritchard presently came out and fell in behind us.

As we passed the station of Le Vésinet, I added Corrège to our band.

Do you care, dear readers, to see a fine swimmer and make the acquaintance of an excellent fellow? If so, take a ticket at Saint-Germain for the station of Le Vésinet, and on reaching that place ask for Corrège.

The excellent fellow will, I undertake to say, put himself at your service for anything you please.

As a first-rate swimmer, he will follow the course of the Seine with you as far as Saint-Cloud, or, if you insist a bit, all the way to Paris.

In due course we arrived at Vatrin's. Before going

into the house, I turned round and could see Pritchard, keeping away judiciously at a respectful distance — two hundred yards or so, in fact.

I gave Michel a nod of comprehension and contentment, and we all went in.

"Wife," Vatrin called out, "breakfast!"

Madame Vatrin threw a look of consternation in our direction.

"Oh, Lord preserve us!" she exclaimed, in alarm.

"Why, what then?" Vatrin reassured her. "There are four of us; well, four bottles of wine, an omelette with twelve eggs in it, the bit of veal, and a good cup of coffee each—that'll be all right enough."

Madame Vatrin heaved a sigh—not that the excellent woman thought us too many, but only because she was afraid there would not be enough for us to eat.

"Come, come, we'll do the sighing to-morrow," laughed Vatrin; "quick's the word. We are in a hurry."

In a jiffy the table was laid and the four bottles of Loiret ranged in line on the tablecloth.

The butter could be heard beginning to sizzle already in the frying-pan.

"Now, tell me what you think of my little country wine, eh?" said Vatrin, pouring me out a full glass.

"Vatrin, Vatrin," I protested, "what the deuce are you doing?" . . .

"True, I forgot you were like the General; *he* never drank anything but water. Sometimes, as a great dissipation, a glass of wine and water, though once my father made him drink a glass of neat wine—look, there's the very glass on the mantelshelf. You've never seen the glass, have you, Monsieur Corrège? Well, we call it the General's glass. Poor General!"

Then, turning to me—

Ah! if only he could see you writing the books

you do, and shooting as you do, he'd be fine and proud."

It was my turn now to heave a sigh.

"There," said Vatrin, "I've no tact at all! though I knew all the time you're like that when I talk about the General. But, hang it! I can't help doing it. He was a man—by the Lord! . . . There now, I've broken my pipe."

The fact is, Vatrin, to give greater emphasis to his words, had wanted to clack his teeth together, and this time had snapped off his pipe-stem close to the bowl.

The latter had tumbled on the floor and broken into a thousand pieces.

"Oh Lord! oh Lord!" cried Vatrin. "Such a nobly coloured pipe as it was!"

"Well, well, Vatrin, you must colour another, that's all."

"Anybody can see *you're* no smoker," growled Vatrin; "if you were, you'd know it takes a pipe six months to acquire a bit of flavour. You smoke, Monsieur Corrège?"

"I should think I do! only I smoke cigars."

"Ah!" grunted Vatrin; "then you don't know what a pipe is."

The keeper opened a cupboard and selected a pipe almost as deeply coloured as the one he had just had the misfortune to smash.

"Good!" I observed. "I see you keep a reserve stock, my dear fellow."

"Oh yes," he admitted, "I have ten or a dozen of them in different degrees of perfection; but all the same, that chap was my favourite."

"Pooh! say no more about it, Vatrin; there are some calamities are incurable, and it's best to forget them."

"Right you are. Now, taste that liquor, and just hold up a glass to the light; it's as clear as a ruby. To your good health!"

"The same to you, Vatrin!" and I drained off my glass to please him.

CHAPTER VIII

WORSE AND WORSE

I HAD barely emptied the glass when we heard a terrible outcry.

"Thief! robber! wretch!" Madame Vatrin's voice was screaming in the kitchen.

"Fire!" cried Michel.

The word was hardly out of his mouth before Vatrin's glass had been sent flying with all the force of my arm muscles.

A yell of pain was heard.

"Ah ha!" laughed Michel. "Monsieur hasn't missed this time, anyway."

"What is it now?" asked Corrège.

"I wager it's that blackguard of a Pritchard again," growled Vatrin.

"Wager away, Vatrin; you'll win your bet," I told him, darting out into the yard as I spoke.

"If only it isn't the veal!" cried Vatrin, turning pale.

"That's just what it is," announced Madame Vatrin, appearing in the doorway; "I had just put it on the window-ledge, and that brute of a dog whipped it off."

"Well," said I, coming in again with the veal in my hand, "I have recovered it for you."

"So it was at Pritchard you threw the glass?"

"That's so," said Michel, "and the glass isn't broken! Well, sir, I call that a fine bit of jugglery."

The glass had caught the dog just in the bend of the shoulder, and dropped back on the grass unbroken.

But the blow had been sharp enough to draw a yelp from Pritchard. To utter this, the dog had been obliged to unclose his jaws, and in doing so he had let go the joint of veal.

It had fallen on the clean grass, and I had picked it up and carried it within doors.

"Come, come," I said, "be comforted, Madame Vatrin. We shall breakfast all right——"

I was going to add, like Ajax, "in defiance of the gods!" but thinking the expression a trifle high-falutin, "in defiance of Pritchard," I said instead.

"What!" cried Madame Vatrin, "you are going to eat that veal?"

"I should think so indeed!" replied Michel. "It's only a question of cutting away the place where the teeth went in; there's nothing more wholesome than a dog's mouth."

"That's true enough!" assented Vatrin.

"True! of course it's true. Why, if you get hurt, sir, by any chance, all you have to do is to let a dog lick your wound. There's never a plaster in the world so good as a dog's tongue."

"Unless he's a mad dog."

"Oh! ah! that's a different matter. But if ever Monsieur *was* bitten by a mad dog, he ought to take the hind leg of a frog, the liver of a rat, the tongue——"

"Good, Michel, good! If ever I am bitten, I promise you I will use your recipe."

"It's the same if Monsieur was ever stung by a viper. . . . Have you ever seen any, Vatrin, in the forest of Le Vésinet?"

"No, never."

"So much the worse; because, if ever you are stung by a viper, you have only——"

I broke in—

"Only to rub the wound with alkali and drink five or six drops of the same mixed with water."

"Yes; and supposing Monsieur is three or four leagues from a town, where is he going to procure alkali?" observed Michel.

"Yes!" said Corrège, "where will you get any?"

"Quite true," I admitted, hanging my head, crushed beneath the weight of argument, "I don't know where I could get any."

"Then what would Monsieur do?"

"I should do like the ancient Psylli of Libya, I should begin by sucking the place."

"And supposing the place were somewhere Monsieur could not suck—on the elbow, for instance?"

I felt more crushed than ever.

"Well, Monsieur would only have to catch the viper, break in its head, open its belly, take out its gall-bladder, and rub the place with it. In two hours he would be well."

"You are sure of that, Michel?"

"Sure? I should think I was sure. It was M. Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire told me, the last time I went to the Jardin des Plantes for eggs. You won't tell me *he's* not an authority, I suppose?"

"Oh no, Michel, you need not fear; I shall never tell you anything of the sort."

Michel has a whole host of recipes, each more efficacious than the other, which he borrows from different sources. I ought to say that all these sources are not as trustworthy as the one he had just quoted. . . .

"There!" said Corrège at this moment,—which meant

the veal had been operated on according to his method, and displayed on every surface a pink and appetising flesh from which all trace of the dog's teeth had disappeared.

After the veal came the omelette; a thick omelette, of a fine deep orange, rather *creamy*. . . .

Yes, creamy; that is the proper technical word, as my fair readers will be aware, if they happen to possess a cook who can make omelettes—which I very much doubt. It's not my word, and Bescherelle's Dictionary, which contains ten thousand words more than the Dictionnaire de l'Académie, gives this and no other.

Ah! I see you are annoyed because I doubt your having a cook who can turn out an omelette. You say you have a *cordon bleu*! Well, that only confirms me in my scepticism. An omelette is a housewife's dish, what a farmer's wife or peasant woman is the best hand at, not a professed cook! An omelette and a chicken stew, those are the two things I set a new cook, male or female, to work upon when I want to test their capabilities.

"But, after all, who ever eats omelettes?"

Oh! but you make a huge mistake, my fair readers! Open Brillat-Savarin at the word *omelette*, and read the paragraph headed *Omelette à laitance de carpe* (carp's roe omelette).

An omelette! Ask the accomplished gourmet what he thinks of an omelette.

I would have taken my teacher of the violin ten leagues any day to eat a crayfish omelette and a bacon salad.

"What! you once kept a violin master?"

"What! once kept a violin master? . . . I should think I did—for three years; see my Memoirs *passim*."

"But I never heard say you played the violin."

"No more I do; but that does not prevent my having learnt to play. See my Memoirs again."

"You should have stuck to it."

"Oh, I am not a M. Ingres or a Raphael to show such desperate perseverance."

However, to come back to Madame Vatrin's omelette—this was first-rate. We called in the excellent woman to compliment her on her skill; but she listened to us in an absent-minded way, peering about her all the time.

"What are you looking for?" Vatrin asked her.

"What am I looking for? Why, I'm looking for, for——" stammered Madame Vatrin. "Well, there's no accounting for it!"

"Out with it; what *are* you looking for?"

"I'm looking for—why, I saw it, I had it in my hand, not ten minutes ago."

"Saw what? had what in your hand? Come, tell us."

"Why, I had only just filled it with sugar."

"Oh, it's your sugar-basin you have lost?"

"Yes, yes, my sugar-basin."

"Well, well!" said Corrège; "the mice are so plenty this year."

"It's not good for them, all the same—for mice, I mean—to eat sugar," observed Michel.

"Why, of course; Monsieur is aware that if you feed a mouse on sugar, it goes blind."

"Yes, Michel, I know that. But you cannot hold the mice to blame in this case; supposing they *have* eaten the sugar, they could hardly have eaten the sugar-basin."

"One never knows," said Corrège sapiently.

"What was the sugar-basin made of?" asked Michel.

"Porcelain," Madame Vatrin informed him,

"porcelain! a superb sugar-basin I won at the Foire des Loges at Saint-Germain."

"When?"

"Only last year."

"Look here, Madame Vatrin," said Corrège: "I won another piece of crockery myself. Say the word, and I'll make you a present of it, to take the place of your sugar-basin. It's never been used."

"That's all very well," said Madame Vatrin; "but all the same, I wonder what can have become of my sugar-basin."

"Where did you put it down?" said Vatrin.

"I put it on the window-shelf."

"Ah!" exclaimed Michel, as if struck by a sudden revelation—and he strode out of the room.

Five minutes afterwards he returned, driving Pritchard in front of him; the dog had the sugar-basin on his nose like a muzzle.

"Here's a sinner whose sin has found him out!" he observed scathingly.

"What! it was Pritchard went off with the sugar-basin?"

"You see it was; hasn't he got it with him now? Oh, he's not the dog to be satisfied with a lump of sugar, not he; he must have the sugar-basin into the bargain."

"You tied the thing on to his nose. I see, I see——"

"Not I; it sticks on by itself."

"By itself!"

"Yes; look, and you will see."

"He has a magnet at the end of his snout, then, the villain?"

"No, no, nonsense; this is the explanation: he poked his nose into the sugar-basin, which is wider at the bottom than the top, and then crammed his mouth

THE DOG HAD THE SUGAR-BASIN ON HIS NOSE LIKE A MUZZLE

with sugar. I came up at that moment; he tried to shut his jaws, but the lumps of sugar prevented him; he tried to withdraw his nose, but found this impossible with the jaws wide open. M. Pritchard was caught in a trap; and there he's got to stop till the sugar melts."

"Well, well, however it happened, Monsieur Dumas, the fact remains you have a dreadful dog there, and whoever gave it you would have done better to keep the beast."

"Let me just tell you one thing, Madame Vatrin," I replied, "and that is—I begin to think the same as you do!"

"Well, it's all most amazing," struck in Vatrin; "and do you know, I'm getting to like the animal; I have a notion we shall make something of him yet."

"And you're in the right, old man," said Corrège; "all great men have had great faults, and once they've left school, it's not prizes of virtue have made them famous."

Meantime the sugar had melted, and, as Michel had foretold, Pritchard got rid of his muzzle without extraneous assistance.

Only, to guard against further accidents, Michel now knotted one end of his handkerchief round the dog's neck and wound the other round his hand.

"Well, well," said Vatrin, "here's more sugar; let's drink our coffee, and be off to see what the scamp can do."

So we finished our coffee, which was even better than Vatrin had led us to expect, and repeated after him, "Let's be off then, and see what the scamp can do!"

CHAPTER IX

CUNNING BETTER THAN BRUTE FORCE

BUT, before setting out, Vatrin took the precaution of substituting a spiked collar for Michel's handkerchief.

Does the reader know precisely what a spiked collar implies? My male readers do not, I feel sure, need information on the point; it is to the fairer members of my audience I address my remarks.

Have you ever noticed, ladies, a butcher's dog, some ill-conditioned, quarrelsome brute, wearing a collar provided with spikes sticking outwards, the object being to prevent any dog that attacks the animal so defended from getting a grip with its teeth in the skin of the neck?

Well, this is a defensive collar. To make a defensive collar into the sort of collar we are speaking of, you have only to turn it the other way about, so as to bring the pointed nails inside.

To it the dog-breaker fastens a cord, and so keeps the animal always at a distance of twenty yards or so. This is what they call running under the guns.

So long as the cord is slack, the points of the spikes merely tickle the dog's neck pleasantly.

But, let the animal get out of control and make a bolt, then the cord is suddenly tautened, and the nails digging instantly into the flesh, the creature stops at

once, giving a more or less agonised yelp according as the points penetrate more or less deeply.

When the animal has been thus pulled up a hundred times or so, it is very seldom he fails to gather that the discipline is intended to stop him from pointing.

When this severe training is relaxed, it is done gradually, little by little. To begin with, the cord is allowed to trail behind with a stick, eight or ten inches long, tied to it crosswise. The stick, as it drags through the bushes, the clover, and lucerne, checks the dog's progress to a certain extent, and brings it home to his intelligence that he is doing wrong.

Then the cord is left to drag alone, without any stick attached. This is the second stage; the obstacle being less, the pain the animal feels is less intense.

Next, the cord is removed, and only the collar left on. This just tickles the dog's neck pleasantly, as we said before, reminding him that the spikes are still there—that his Damocles' sword still hangs over him.

Last of all, the collar is taken off altogether—though of course it may be put on again in great emergencies. The training is practically finished.

This was the dreadful ordeal Pritchard was now to undergo.

Think what a dire humiliation for a pointer, accustomed to beat up the game at three hundred yards away from his master, to be forced to run under the very guns!

I felt convinced in my inmost heart that Pritchard would never, never submit.

Vatrin declared he had broken the most recalcitrant in before now.

Michel contented himself with the judicious observation, "Well, we shall see."

And we soon did see. At the first tree he came to, Pritchard galloped three times round the trunk, and was pulled up short.

"Did you ever see such a brute?" growled Vatrin, and making as many turns round the stem, in the reverse direction, as the dog had made, he released the captive.

Then we set off again. At the second tree he came across Pritchard repeated the same performance, and once more found himself tied fast.

Only, instead of taking his three turns to the right, the same as the first time, Pritchard had now gone round by the left.

An instructor in the National Guard could not have got an order more exactly and accurately executed.

"Double-dyed brute!" cried Vatrin.

And he too repeated his three turns round this second tree, of course going in the reverse direction, and again set the dog free.

At the third tree he encountered, Pritchard followed the same procedure.

"Trebly dyed brute!" bellowed Vatrin.

Michel burst out laughing.

"Well, what now?" asked Vatrin crossly.

"Why, can't you see he's doing it on purpose?" grinned Michel.

I was beginning to share the latter's opinion.

"What! does it on purpose?"—and Vatrin looked at me.

"Upon my word," I said, "I am afraid it's so!"

"The cunning villain!" shouted Vatrin. "Well, you shall see!"—and he pulled his whip out of his pocket.

Pritchard lay down in an attitude of resignation, like a Russian serf condemned to the knout.

"What's to be done? Thrash him to ribbons, the blackguard?"

"No, Vatrin, no; it would be no good," I protested.

"But there, there, there——" grumbled Vatrin, thoroughly out of temper.

"Why, then, we must just learn the animal to follow his instinct; you will never give a pointer the qualities of a brach-dog."

"Then you say, let him do as he likes?"

"Yes, that's what I advise, Vatrin."

"Off with you! tut, gallop, you scoundrel!" cried Vatrin, removing the cord.

No sooner did Pritchard feel himself free than, without troubling his head about any tree whatever, he disappeared in the undergrowth, nose down and bushy tail waving in the wind.

"Well, he's gone now, the scamp, anyway," said I.

"Better go look for him," said Michel cheerfully.

"Look for him, well!" grunted Vatrin, shaking his head with the air of a man who is far from convinced of the verity of the Biblical maxim, "Search and ye shall find!"

Nevertheless we set out on our search for the errant Pritchard.

CHAPTER X

A CAPACIOUS POCKET

THERE was nothing better to be done indeed than to follow Michel's advice and go look for Master Pritchard.

This we did, calling and whistling again and again after the vagabond, as the worthy keeper called him. The search lasted a good half-hour, Pritchard taking good care to make no sort of reply to our appeals.

At last Michel, who was walking in the line thirty yards or so from me, stopped suddenly.

"Sir!" he called out, "sir!"

"Why, what's the matter, Michel?"

"Come and see, sir; oh, do come and look!"

I was not bound, I suppose, by the same obligations as Pritchard to muteness and immobility, so I made no bones about answering Michel's cry and making in his direction.

"Well," I asked, "what's wrong now?"

"Nothing; only look, look!"—and he pointed in front of him.

I turned my eyes in the direction indicated, and beheld Pritchard standing as stock-still as the celebrated hound of Cephalus I had the honour to tell you about a little above.

Head, back, and tail made a straight line, perfectly straight and perfectly rigid.

"Vatrin," I said in my turn, "come here"—and on his reaching my side, I showed him Pritchard.

"Good!" said he. "I believe he's pointing."

"Why, of course he is!" said Michel.

"What is he pointing at?" I asked.

"Come along, and let's see," was Vatrin's answer.

We crept nearer, and Vatrin circled as many times round Pritchard as Pritchard had done about the trees. But the animal never stirred.

"All the same," said Vatrin, "he *can* point."

Then, waving me forward, "Come on, sir," he said.

"Look there," he went on, when I was beside him. "Look there . . . do you see?"

"No, I can't see anything."

"What! you don't see a rabbit in its form?"

"Why, yes, of course I do."

"Lord!" cried Vatrin; "if I had my stick, I could knock the fellow over, and he'd make you a nice rabbit ragout."

"Oh," said Michel, "don't let that stop you. Cut one; cut yourself a stick."

"Good! And while I'm doing it, Pritchard will run in."

"No fear of that; I'll answer for him—unless the rabbit bolts in the meantime."

"I'll go and cut one," declared Vatrin, "if only to see what'll happen;" and he set to work.

Pritchard never stirred an inch; only from time to time he turned on us his yellow eye, which glittered like a topaz.

"Patience, patience," Michel would tell him; "you can see for yourself M. Vatrin is cutting a stick."

And Pritchard, cocking an eye at Vatrin, seemed quite to understand, and bringing back his head into

the straight line, he would fall back into complete immobility.

Presently, when Vatrin had cut a stout stick—

"Ah!" said Michel, "you have time enough to trim it too"—and Vatrin proceeded to cut away the twigs and branches.

Then, the stick being duly trimmed and smoothed, he crept up cautiously, measured the distance with his eye, and hit down hard into the tuft of grass in which the rabbit was crouching.

Next instant the poor little creature's white belly could be seen, and its four paws beating the air.

Pritchard wanted to pounce on the rabbit; but Vatrin was there, and after a moment's scrimmage the law carried the day.

"Put that chap in your pocket, Michel; there's the ragout we were promised all right."

"There's a fine long back for you," exclaimed Michel, as he pouched the rabbit between the lining and the cloth of his coat. God only knows how many of the same sort the same pocket had held at different times!

Vatrin looked round for Pritchard to give the dog a word of praise; but lo! Pritchard had vanished.

"Where the devil is the dog now?" snapped Vatrin.

"Where is he?" said Michel. "That's easy guessed: he's off after another."

It was obviously true; and we set out again in search of our friend.

In ten minutes or so we came across him.

"Stands like a rock, eh?" said Michel; "just look at him!"

In fact, Pritchard was again pointing in the same thoroughly conscientious way as before.

Vatrin crept up again, and—

"Here's the bunny!" he whispered.

"Well, Vatrin, this time you've got your stick all ready cut."

The stick rose in the air and, swinging down again almost instantaneously, whistled through a clump of bramble.

Then Vatrin plunged his hand into the bush and pulled out a second rabbit by the ears.

"There, Michel," he laughed; "clap that in your other pocket."

Michel did not require to be told twice; only he put it in the same pocket.

"Well, well, Michel; and why not in the other one, as Vatrin said?"

"Ah, but, sir," the fellow explained, "I can take five of 'em in each."

"Michel, Michel, you must not say things like that before a public functionary."

Then, turning to Vatrin—

"Come, Vatrin, the number three is pleasing to the gods."

"Maybe," said Vatrin, "but M. Guérin may not be equally well pleased." M. Guérin, we should explain, was the Head Inspector.

"Besides, it's all no good; you know Pritchard's little ways."

"As well as if I'd made the dog myself," said Vatrin emphatically.

"Well, what do you say of him?"

"I say this: if only he'd run under the guns, he'd be a first-rate sporting dog. However, he's a pointer, and point he can!"

"Where is he got to now?" I said to Michel.

"Oh, he'll have found a third rabbit by this time."

So we searched again, and, as he had supposed, we found Pritchard pointing as before.

"'Pon honour," said Vatrin thoughtfully, "I should like to know, as a matter of curiosity, how long he'll stay there"—and the keeper pulled out his watch.

"Well, Vatrin," I told him, "you are here in the performance of your official duties, and can afford to satisfy your fancy; but I am expecting company, so please excuse me if I make for home."

"Very well, sir; go by all means."

So Michel and myself set off homewards for the Villa Médicis.

Turning round for a last look, I saw Vatrin slipping a spiked collar round Pritchard's neck without the latter seeming so much as to notice what the keeper was about.

An hour later Vatrin walked into my house.

"Seven-and-twenty minutes," he called out the instant he caught sight of me, "and if the rabbit hadn't bolted, the dog would be there still."

"So then, Vatrin, what do you say of him?"

"Egad, I say he points first-rate."

"Yes, we know that; but what is there left for you to teach him?"

"Only one thing, which you'll teach him as well as I can—a mere bagatelle—to retrieve. You can teach that as a game, without your needing me at all."

"You hear that, Michel?"

"Oh, sir," said Michel, "it's done."

"What do you mean by 'it's done'?"

"Why, he retrieves like an angel."

This did not give any very precise notion of the way Pritchard retrieved. But Michel threw the dog his handkerchief, and Pritchard duly brought it back to its owner.

Then Michel tossed him one of Vatrin's two rabbits, and Pritchard carried it back again.

Finally, Michel went to the poultry-run, picked up an egg, and laid it on the ground.

Pritchard retrieved the egg just as successfully as he had the rabbit and the handkerchief.

"Why, the beast," Vatrin declared, "knows everything he can know; all he wants now is practice."

"Well, Vatrin, next 2nd of September I will let you have news of Pritchard."

"And just think," sighed the keeper, "that if a ruffian like that would only consent to run under the guns, he'd be worth five hundred francs if he's worth a penny!"

"True for you, Vatrin," I told him; "but you must just make up your mind to bear it. He never will consent."

At that moment the guests I expected arrived, and as one of Vatrin's most conspicuous qualities is discretion, he withdrew, and so put an end to our conversation, interesting as it was.

CHAPTER XI

MOUTON

WHO were these visitors whose arrival interrupted the weighty discussion Michel, Vatrin, and myself were holding with regard to Pritchard?

They included: Maquet, who had just added to the denizens of my monkey-house the *Last of the Laidmanoirs*, and in collaboration with whom I was then at work on the *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*;

Fiennes, one of the best-hearted fellows I know—when he does not think himself bound to uphold some opinion in literary matters;

Atala Beauchêne, who played Anna Damby in *Kean* with so much grace, and who was presently to play Geneviève in *Les Girondins* with so much feeling;

And, to complete the party, my son.

I welcomed my guests, and put the house at their disposition from cellar to garret—the stable with its four horses, the coach-house with its three carriages, the garden and its hen-run, monkey-house, aviary, conservatory, game of box-quoits, to say nothing of its flower-beds.

All I kept for my exclusive use was a little summer-house with coloured-glass windows, against the wall of which I had fixed a table, and which in summer I made my writing-room.

I informed my guests that the house contained a new inmate, by name *Mouton* (sheep), and warned them not to trust too implicitly to his name, as beyond that I knew nothing, and was entirely ignorant of his history and disposition.

I showed them where he was squatted in one of the garden-paths, rolling his great head about like a Polar bear, while two gleaming eyes darted red fire like the reflection of a brace of carbuncles.

However, always provided you did not interfere with him, Mouton had always shown himself perfectly inoffensive.

I commissioned Alexandre to do the honours. For myself, I had no time for amusement; I had my three *feuilletons* to attend to.

I don't mean to say that writing my stories does not amuse me. Far from it; but it is not the sort of amusement that appeals to ordinary mortals.

The company dispersed about the garden, and each chose for himself what struck him as most attractive—monkey-house, aviary, conservatory, or poultry-run.

I was dressed in my shooting rig, and ran up to my room to dress myself at once for company and work. You must know, reader, if you care to know, that winter and summer I work without coat and waistcoat, in *pantalons à pieds*, slippers, and shirt-sleeves.

The only difference the changing seasons bring with them in my costume is to alter the material of which my trousers and shirt are made.

In winter my trousers are of cloth; in summer of dimity. In winter my shirt is of linen; in summer of cambric.

Accordingly I reappeared ten minutes later in cambric shirt and dimity *pantalon à pieds*.

"Why! what's that thing?" asked Atala Beauchêne.

"Oh, only a father I have vowed shall wear virgin white till he's of age!" laughed Alexandre.

I passed between a double row of applauding spectators, and reached the refuge of my working arbour.

I was then at work on *Le Bâtard de Mauléon*, and as my neighbour Challamel had just made me a present of Mouton, at the very time I was starting on the book, I had the happy thought of describing the animal and making him play a part in my latest romance.

Following Walter Scott's method again, I had begun by drawing Mouton's portrait, giving him the name of Allan, and making him the property of Don Frederigo, brother of Don Pedro.

I copy Allan's description in the book, which will relieve me of any necessity of delineating Mouton more particularly:—

"Behind them raced a dog, bounding vigorously forward.

"He was one of those sturdy yet slim hounds of the Sierra that have a muzzle as pointed as a bear, an eye as glittering as a lynx, limbs as sinewy and nervous as a stag.

"His body was covered with a complete coat of long, silky hair that gleamed with silvery reflections in the sun.

"Round his neck was a heavy gold collar set with rubies and carrying a little bell of the same precious metal.

"Joy was expressed in his every bound, and these bounds were directed to two objects—one visible, one still hidden. The former was a snow-white charger, with heavy housings of purple and brocade, which replied to the dog's advances with a merry neigh; the latter was no doubt some noble Knight still detained

under the vaulted entrance, into which the hound kept dashing impatiently, only to emerge again leaping and frolicking a few moments later.

"Finally, the man for whom the horse neighed, and the dog leapt, and the people shouted *Viva!* appeared himself, and one and the same cry was taken up by a thousand voices, 'Long live Don Frederigo!'"

Well, if you want to know, dear readers, who Don Frederigo was, you must read the *Bâtard de Maulĕon*. I have undertaken only to tell you this much here, who and what Mouton was, and I have told you.

So let us pursue the history of this new character we have come across, without so much as knowing whither it will lead us.

It is what, in railway parlance, is called a *branch line*, and in connection with a poem or romance an *episode*.

Ariosto was the inventor of the episode. Who was the inventor of the branch line I should like to be able to inform you; but unfortunately I don't know myself.

CHAPTER XII

A COMING CATASTROPHE CASTS ITS SHADOW BEFORE

I TOLD you just above: "Now you know what Mouton was." But I was wrong: you do not know.

You know his outward appearance, very true; but that is a minor point, after all. It is character that is all-important in dogs as in men.

If, in order to know people, it were enough to know their outward man, then, on Socrates telling his disciples, "The first precept of wisdom is to *know thyself*," his disciples would simply have looked at their reflection in a polished steel mirror; they would have seen that they had red or brown hair, as the case might be, blue or black eyes, light or dark complexion, thin or plump cheeks, a slim or heavy figure; and once they had verified these facts, they would have completed their knowledge of themselves!

But that was not what Socrates meant by his famous *γνῶθι σεαυτὸν*; what he did mean was: "Dive into your deepest being, scrutinise your conscience, and discover what you are worth morally. The body is only the envelope of the soul, the sheath of the sword."

Well, so far, you know only the envelope, the outside, of Mouton, you only know the exterior sheath of this descendant of Allan.

And even this you know incorrectly. I have just shown you Allan wearing a gold collar set with rubies and a little bell of the same precious metal round his neck. Such magnificence, you will of course understand, was fitting enough for a dog belonging to a king's brother; but a mere novelist's and play-writer's dog has no claim to any such distinctions.

Mouton did not possess a gold collar set with rubies —nor even an iron collar or a leather one. This detail set right, let us go on to Mouton's character and disposition.

This is difficult to define exactly. At first sight Mouton appeared rather of the lymphatic than the bilious, the sanguine, or the nervous temperament; he was deliberate in his movements, slow and solemn in his ways of doing things. I had tried to question Challamel as to his antecedents, but he had confined himself to telling me—

"Endeavour, to begin with, to win his attachment, and you will then find out what he can do."

This had made me somewhat suspicious about the dog's past history; but unfortunately nothing is farther from my natural impulses than suspicion. My only care was to act in such a way as to win Mouton's love.

Accordingly, at breakfast and dinner time, I used to put my bones aside for him, and after every meal carry them to him myself.

Mouton would gnaw these dainties with an air of combined ferocity and gloom; but all my attentions failed to win the smallest token of gratitude or friendliness on his side.

Sometimes of an evening I would take a walk on the celebrated Terrace of Saint-Germain, and take Mouton with me in hopes of enlivening his spirits. But instead of running and leaping like other dogs, he

always dragged lugubriously behind, head and tail down, like a pauper's dog following his master's coffin to the grave.

The only variety was when an acquaintance came up to speak to me. Then Mouton would give a low growl.

"Oh! oh!" my friend would exclaim. "What's the matter with your dog?"

"Never mind him; he is by way of getting used to me."

"Yes; but he does not seem much like getting used to other people."

People knowing in reading character would add—

"Have a care! That chap has a nasty look in his eye."

And so saying, if they added the merit of prudence to that of knowingness, they would beat a hasty retreat, asking me—

"What's your animal's name, eh?"

"Mouton."

"Well, good-bye, good-bye. . . . Keep a careful eye on Mouton!"

Then I would turn round and say—

"Mouton, do you hear what they think of you?" But Mouton never said a word.

I remembered, by the bye, that during the whole week the animal had been a member of my household I had never once heard him bark.

When, instead of a friend, it was a friend's dog that approached me, or rather Mouton, with the polite intention of bidding him good-day after the fashion of dogs, Mouton would growl just as he did for a man; but now the growl was instantly followed by a dart and a bite, as rapidly delivered as a boxer's hit out from the shoulder.

If the dog attacked was within Mouton's "reach," woe betide him! he was a maimed dog for the rest of his days.

If he were lucky enough, by a swift backward movement, by feint or flight, to escape the terrible jaws, and they only closed on emptiness, then you heard Mouton's teeth close with the same snap and rattle M. Martin's lions make when they are waiting impatiently for feeding time.

On the day following my third appearance with Mouton, I received an official communication from the Mayor of Saint-Germain, in which he invited me to buy a chain and put Mouton on it when I took my walks abroad in his company.

I had the required article purchased at once, in order to obey like a good citizen the municipal recommendation. But Michel persistently forgot to buy a collar.

Now, the reader will see directly how Michel's forgetfulness probably saved my life.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW I WAS OVER-PERSUADED TO BUY A GREEN MONKEY AND A BLUE MACAW

FROM what has been related in the preceding chapter, it is evident that Mouton's character was still, if not absolutely unknown, at any rate more or less a mystery to me, and that what the animal had so far revealed was not particularly attractive.

Such was the general state of things about two o'clock one afternoon: Mouton amusing himself by digging up one of Michel's dahlias—as every good gardener should be, Michel was bent on producing a blue dahlia one of these days; my son lying in a hammock smoking a cigarette; Maquet, de Fiennes, and Atala teasing Mysouff, then undergoing a five years' term of imprisonment in the monkey-house for murder—under extenuating circumstances.

We must ask our readers' indulgence for postponing the catastrophe we have led them to believe imminent: but we deem the moment arrived to say a few words anent Mademoiselle Desgarcins, Potich, the Last of the Laidmanoirs, and the felon Mysouff.

Mademoiselle Desgarcins was a dog-faced monkey, and one of the tiniest of her species. Her birthplace was unknown; but, if we are to trust to Cuvier's classification, she must have seen the light somewhere on the old continent.

The way I became her possessor was quite simple and ordinary.

I had been to pay a visit to Havre. With what object? Upon my word! I can hardly say—perhaps it was to have a look at the sea. Once there, I had immediately been seized with the wish to be back in Paris.

But it was out of the question to return quite empty-handed. The only point to be decided was *what* I should take back with me from that seaport.

I had a wide range of choice—ivory toys from China, fans from the Far East, weapons and trophies from the South Sea Islands, and a hundred other curios. But none of these articles quite took my fancy.

I was strolling along the quay, as melancholy as the fantastic Dane of Shakespeare's immortal play, when I caught sight, at the door of a dealer in animals, of a green monkey and a blue macaw.

The monkey had put her little hand out between the bars of her cage and caught hold of my coat-tail.

The blue parrot was twisting its head about and gazing amorously at me out of its yellow eye, the pupil of which kept narrowing and dilating with the tenderest of tender expressions.

I am very amenable to demonstrations of the kind, and those of my friends who know me best declare that, for my own good name and my family's, it is a very lucky thing I was not born a woman.

I stopped therefore, pressing the monkey's paw in one hand, and gently scratching the macaw's head with the other, at the risk of meeting the same

fate as Colonel Bro with his parrot. See my Memoirs.

But nothing of the sort occurred. Instead, the little monkey drew my hand gently to her mouth, put out her tongue through the bars and licked my fingers lovingly.

The parrot dropped its head right between its two feet, half shut its eye, with a look of supreme content, and gave a low murmur of pleasure that left no doubt about its agreeable feelings.

Well, 'pon my word! What a charming pair! If I were not very much afraid their owner will demand Duguesclin's ransom for them, I would ask him how much.

"Monsieur Dumas," said the dealer, suddenly appearing out of his shop, "can I oblige you with anything — this monkey here, and this parrot, for instance?"

Monsieur Dumas! It was a third bit of delicate flattery, crowning the other two.

One day I hope some wizard will reveal why it is that my face, one of the least widely reproduced in paintings, engravings, and lithography, is familiar at the very Antipodes, so that wherever I land, the first porter that comes up asks me instantly—

"Monsieur Dumas, where am I to carry your trunk?"

True, in default of portrait or bust, I have been represented again and again by my good friends Cham and Nadar. So, I suppose, the two traitors were deceiving me all the while, and instead of drawing my caricature, they were giving the world my portrait! . . .

Besides the inconvenience of being precluded from travelling anywhere incognito, this widespread vogue

of my features involves another disadvantage. Every shopkeeper in the world, having read in my biographies that I am accustomed to pitch my money out of the window, no sooner sees me walking up to his shop than he takes the virtuous resolution to sell whatever he has to sell three times more dear to M. Dumas than to the general run of his victims—and makes a point of acting accordingly.

However, the mischief is done, and there is no help for it.

Well, in this case the fellow addressed me in the unctuous tones of the tradesman who has quite made up his mind to sell, even though you may be firmly resolved not to buy: "Now, Monsieur Dumas, shall I oblige you with my monkey and parrot?"

It only needed the addition of three letters to give the word its real meaning, and make the sentence run as it should,—"Monsieur Dumas, shall I *dis*oblige you with my monkey and parrot?"

"Oh yes," I grumbled; "now you know my name, of course you are going to sell me your parrot and your monkey at just twice their value."

"Oh, Monsieur Dumas, how can you say such a thing? I would never overcharge *you*! I shall ask you . . . ask you . . ."

The man pretended to search his memory to recall the exact price.

"I shall ask you a hundred francs."

I am bound to say I trembled with joy. I cannot lay claim to any very precise acquaintance with the current market-price of apes and parrots; but a hundred francs, for two such creatures, struck me as an unheard-of bargain.

"Only I feel obliged, as an honest man, to tell you

this," the dealer went on; "the parrot will most likely never talk."

This doubled his value in my eyes. I was going to have a bird that would not be forever dinning in my ears his inevitable, "Pretty Poll! Pretty Poll!"

"Dear, dear," said I, "that's unfortunate."

But I had hardly said the word ere I felt ashamed of my duplicity. I had prevaricated,—yes, prevaricated in hopes of getting a reduction in price,—while the dealer had told the truth at the risk of depreciating his own goods.

So, under the influence of these remorseful feelings—

"Look here," I cried, "I don't want to haggle with you; I will give you eighty francs."

"Done!" said the fellow, without an instant's hesitation.

"Yes, yes; but let us understand each other," I added, seeing plainly I had been victimised. "Eighty francs including the monkey's cage and the parrot's stand."

"H'm!" grumbled the dealer, "that was not in our bargain; but there, I can refuse you nothing. Yes, I have had some fine laughs, I can tell you, over your *Capitaine Pamphile*, if you care to know it. Well, well, there's no more to be said; you understand animals, and I hope my little friends won't be unhappy with you. Yes, take the cage and the stand."

So I took the cage and the stand,—the two together were worth perhaps two francs,—and walked back to the *Hôtel de l'Amirauté*, looking like a sort of amateur Robinson Crusoe.

The same evening I set off for Paris, engaging the whole *coupé* of the diligence for myself as far as

Rouen. When I say for myself, I mean, of course, for myself, my monkey, and my parrot.

From Rouen to Poissy I went by railway, and from Poissy to the Villa Médicis in a glass-coach which I hired in that town, once the capital of the Countship of Louis IX, our Sainted Sovereign.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW I ARRIVED AT THE INTERESTING INFORMATION THAT PARROTS BREED IN FRANCE

I NEED not mention that Mademoiselle Desgarcins and Buvat were not yet christened, my custom being to bestow names, surnames, and nicknames on my protégés according to the merits or demerits, physical or moral, which I observe in them. So far they were simply known as the *little monkey* and the *blue macaw*.

"Here, quick, Michel! quick!" I called out as I came in. "Here's something in your line."

Michel ran up, and I handed him the monkey's cage and the parrot's box, from which its tail stuck out like a lance-head. I had superseded the perch, for which I got a franc, by a box that cost me three.

"Ah," observed Michel, "yes, it is the long-haired monkey of Senegal—*Cercopithecus sabœa*."

I looked at Michel in the deepest amazement.

"What was that you said, Michel?"

"*Cercopithecus sabœa*."

"So you know Latin, Michel. Why, you must teach me in your spare time in that case."

"No, I don't know Latin, but I do know my *Dictionary of Natural History*."

"'Pon my soul! And the parrot, do you know it too?" I asked, pulling the bird out of its box.

"I should think I did!" said Michel. "Why, it's the blue macaw, *Macrocercus ararauna.* Ah, sir, why did you not bring the female with you along with the male?"

"What for, Michel? because parrots, you know, don't breed in France."

"That is just where Monsieur is mistaken," said Michel imperturbably.

"What! the blue macaw breeds in France?"

"Yes, sir; in France."

"In the South, perhaps."

"No, sir, it does not need to be in the South."

"Where then?"

"At Caen, sir."

"What! at Caen?"

"Yes, at Caen, I tell you, sir, at Caen!"

"I was not aware that the latitude of Caen was such as to allow macaws to reproduce their species. Go and fetch my *Bouillet*, Michel."

Michel soon returned with the encyclopædia in question.

"*Cacus*—no, that's not it. . . . *Cadet de Gassicourt*—no, that's not it. . . . *Caducée*—that's not it . . . *Caen* at last——"

"Now you will see, Michel," and I read out—

"'*Cadomus*, chief town of the Department of Calvados, on the Orne and Odon, 223 kilometres west of Paris, population 41,876. Court of Assize, Court of Primary Jurisdiction, and Tribunal de Commerce——'"

"You will see, sir," said Michel; "the parrots are coming, never fear."

"'College, School of Law, Academy of Science——'"

"You are getting warm, sir!"

"'Extensive trade in plaster, salt, timber, and deal. . . . Captured by the English in 1346 and 1417.—Retaken by the French, etc.—Birthplace of Malherbe, T. Lefebvre, Choron, etc.—9 cantons: Bourguebus, Villers-Bocage, etc., and Caen town, which counts as two; 205 communes, total population 140,435.—Caen was the capital of Lower Normandy.'—And that's all, Michel."

"What, it does not say in your book that the *ararauna*, otherwise known as the blue macaw, breeds at Caen?"

"No, Michel, not a word about it."

"Well, what a dictionary! Wait a bit, and I'll fetch you a different sort, and then you'll see."

Accordingly, in a few minutes more Michel returned with his *Dictionary of Natural History*.

"Now you'll see, sir, now you'll see!" he cried, opening *his* treasury of knowledge. "Péritoine—that's not it . . . Pérou—that's not it . . . *Perroquet*—there we are! 'Parrots are monogamous birds.'"

"You know Latin so well, Michel, you will know what *monogamous* means, I feel sure."

"It means they can sing on every note, I suppose."

"No, Michel, no, not a bit of it; it means they have only one wife."

"Ah!" cried Michel, "that's because they talk like human beings, most likely. However, here's what I want—'It was long believed that parrots did not breed in Europe, but experiments have proved the contrary in the case of a pair of blue macaws at Caen. . . .'—At Caen, there you see, sir——"

"'Pon my word, yes, I see."

"'M. Lamouroux supplies details in connection with the results then obtained.'"

"Well, let's hear M. Lamouroux' details, Michel;" and Michel proceeded—

"'These macaws, between the month of March 1818, and the month of August 1822, that is to say in a period of four years and a half, laid sixty-two eggs in nine broods——'"

"Michel, I never said that macaws did not lay; what I said was——"

"'Amongst the number,'" Michel went on reading, "'twenty-five eggs were hatched out, and of the young ones only ten died. The rest lived and became perfectly acclimatised——'"

"Michel, I have not a word to say——"

"'The number of eggs varied, in some cases amounting to as many as six at once——'"

"Michel, I surrender unconditionally."

"Only," concluded Michel, closing his book, "Monsieur knows he must never give them either bitter almonds or parsley?"

Michel, who had left a finger between the leaves, reopened his book.

"'Parsley and bitter almonds,'" he read out impressively, "'are deadly poisons for parrots.'"

"Good! Michel, I won't forget."

And I never did. In fact, some while after, when I was told that M. Persil (parsley) had died suddenly, I exclaimed—

"Dear! dear! perhaps he had been eating parrot!"

CHAPTER XV

A CABRIOLET DRIVER WHO WAS A GREAT GEOGRAPHER ASSURES ME I AM A NEGRO

I WAS dumbfounded at Michel's scientific knowledge; he knew the *Dictionary of Natural History* off by heart.

To give another instance of the same sort of thing. One day I was driving about Paris with one of my friends in one of the old-fashioned cabriolets then in vogue, where the passengers sit side by side with the coachman. I forget why, but I had occasion to mention to my companion that I came from the Department of the Aisne.

"Ah! so you come from the Aisne, do you?" the driver asked me.

"I do. Is there anything in that you object to?"

"Oh no, sir! quite the contrary."

The man's original question and his subsequent answer to mine were equally inexplicable to me. Why had the fellow exclaimed when he heard I came from that particular Department? and why did he prefer—his *quite the contrary* led me to suppose he did prefer—my belonging to that Department rather than to any one of the eighty-five others?

I should certainly have asked him to explain these points if I had been alone with him; but, my thoughts

being occupied with what I was saying to my friend, I let my curiosity gallop off ahead, and as our nag never got beyond a walk, it got so far away in front I never caught it up again

A week afterwards I happened to hire a cabriolet at the same coach-stand.

"Ah ha!" cried my driver, "why, it's the gentleman who comes from the Aisne."

"Quite right; and you are the coachman who drove me a week ago?"

"Myself and no one else. Where am I to take you to-day, sir?"

"To the Observatoire."

"H'sh, sir! not so loud, please."

"But why?"

"Why, if my horse overheard you, you know. . . . Such a long way! . . . Hup! Bijou! . . . Ah, sir! there's a fellow, if ever he comes in for ten thousand a year, won't buy a cabriolet!"

I looked at the man curiously.

"Tell me, why did you ask me if I came from the Department of the Aisne?"

"Because, if Monsieur had been by himself and inclined to talk, we could have had a chat about the Department."

"So you know it?"

"Know it! I should think so! A noble Department! The Department of General Foy, of M. Méchin, of M. Lherbette, and M. Demoustier, author of the *Lettres à Émilie sur la Mythologie*."

As you see, dear reader, I was entirely forgotten in the enumeration of the famous men of the Department.

This prejudiced me a good deal against the man.

"Well, what places do you know in the Department?"

"I know every place."

"What, you! Every one?"

"Every one."

"Do you know Laon?" only I pronounced it *Lan.*

"Laon, you mean, don't you?" and *he* called it *La-on.*

"Laon or Lan, it's the same thing; only, it's written Laon and pronounced Lan."

"Lord, sir! I say a word as it's written."

"You are in favour of M. Marle's phonetic spelling, eh?"

"I know nothing about M. Marle and his spelling; but I know Laon right enough—the *Bibrax* of the Romans and the *Laudanum* of the Middle Ages. . . . Come now, why do you look at me like that?"

"I don't merely look at you; I marvel at you, I admire you!"

"Oh! poke fun as much as ever you please; you won't hinder my knowing Laon and the whole Department of the Aisne, with its Prefecture and all. More by token, there's a tower there built by Louis d' Outre-Mer, and a vast trade in artichokes is carried on."

"I have not a word to say to the contrary. You speak God's own truth, my good fellow. And Soissons? do you know Soissons?"

"Soissons—*Noviodunum,*—do I know *Noviodunum*? I should think I do!"

"I congratulate you; I used to know Soissons myself, but I never knew Noviodunum."

"But it's the same thing, six of one and half a dozen of the other. That's where the Cathedral is of the watery Saint—Saint Médard, you know. If it rains

on Saint Médard's Day, why it rains forty days on end. He should be the patron of cab-drivers, for sure! Do I know Soissons? . . . Well, well, well, you ask me if I know Soissons—birthplace of Louis d'Héricourt, of Collot d'Herbois, of Quinette; where Clovis defeated Siagrius and Charles Martel vanquished Chilperic, where King Robert died; chief town of its arrondissement; six cantons—Braisne-sur-Vesle, Oulchy-le-Château, Soissons, Vailly-sur-Aisne, Vic-sur-Aisne, Villers-Cotterets——"

"Ah! and Villers-Cotterets, do you know it?" hoping to have him on toast when it came to my native place.

"*Villerii ad Cotiam retiæ.*—Do I know it? Villers-Cotterets, otherwise Coste de Retz, considerable village."

"No, no; small town," I protested.

"Large village I say, and I stick to it."

In fact he said it with so much assurance that I saw I should gain nothing by contradicting him. Besides, I had a sneaking suspicion I might be wrong.

"Big village, so be it," I said, giving in.

"Oh! it's not a question of *so be it*, it's a fact. Do I know Villers-Cotterets!—forest of 25,000 acres; population 2692; old castle of the time of François I, now a poor-house; birthplace of Charles Albert Demoustier, author of the *Lettres à Émilie sur la Mythologie* . . ."

"And of Alexandre Dumas," I added diffidently.

"Alexandre Dumas, author of *Monte-Cristo*, and *The Three Musketeers*?"

I nodded assent.

"No," said the coachman decidedly.

"No? What do you mean?"

"I mean, no!"

"You say Alexandre Dumas was not born at Villers-Cotterets?"

"I repeat he was not born there."

"Come, come now, that's going a bit too far."

"Oh, say what you please; Alexandre Dumas does not come from Villers-Cotterets. Besides, he's a Negro."

I confess I was dumbfounded. The man seemed so exceedingly well informed about the whole Department I began to fear I must be mistaken. Since he said so with such an air of certainty, and having the whole district at his finger-ends, it really seemed, after all, I might be a Nigger and have been born in the Congo or in Senegal.

"But *you* were born there," I said; "you were, in the Aisne?"

"No, I come from Nanterre."

"But you have lived there, at any rate?"

"Not I."

"But you have been there, surely?"

"Never once."

"Then how the devil do you come to know the Department as you do?"

"Oh! where's the puzzle? Look there," and he offered me a tattered book.

"What book is it?"

"It's my whole library, from garret to cellar."

"The deuce! you seem to consult it pretty often."

"I've read nothing else for twenty years."

"Yet you are a great reader, by what I can see."

"What would you have a man do when he's on the stand? And times are so hard one is half the day there."

I opened the book, curious to know the name of a work which had enjoyed the privilege of serving for a man's amusement during twenty years.

And I read : STATISTICAL COMPENDIUM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AISNE.

CHAPTER XVI

I BUY MADEMOISELLE DESGARCINS A HUSBAND

MICHEL resembled my cabriolet driver. Only he had chosen a sort of reading, if not more profitable, at least a trifle less insipid.

"Michel," I said to him, "look here; we must go to Laurent's and get them to make a perch for the *Macrocercus ararauna*, and to Trouille's to buy a cage for the *Cercopithecus sabæa*."

"Very good, sir, so far as the perch goes," Michel replied; "but for the cage, there's no need."

"What do you mean,—no need? Why, the poor creature can never stay in that one; it's a bullfinch's cage. The bird would die of cramp in a week."

"While Monsieur was away, we had a bit of a disaster."

"Ho, ho! a disaster, eh? And what was it?"

"A weasel killed the pheasant; Monsieur is going to have it for his dinner."

I uttered an exclamation that implied neither refusal nor consent. I am ready enough to eat game I have shot myself, but I don't feel so eager about what's been killed by any animal except a sporting-dog.

"In that case," I said, "the cage is at liberty?"

"Yes, since this morning."

"Then let's get our monkey into it.

We carried the small cage close up to the big one, and set the two doors wide open facing each other. The monkey sprang into her new abode, leapt excitedly from perch to perch, and ended by clinging to the bars, gnashing her teeth at me, uttering little plaintive cries and putting out her tongue at me.

"Sir," said Michel, "what she wants is a male."

"You think that's it, eh, Michel?"

"I'm sure it is."

"So you hold that monkeys breed in this country, the same as parrots?"

"There are some in the Jardin des Plantes that were born there. Now, listen to me, sir; there's a little Auvergnat lad comes here with his monkey to beg a trifle now and again. If I were Monsieur, I'd buy his monkey of him."

"Why his rather than any other monkey?"

"Because he's as gentle as a lamb, and has had a first-rate education. He wears a cap with a feather, and makes a bow when you give him a nut or a bit of sugar."

"Can he do any other tricks?"

"He fights a duel."

"Is that the end of his accomplishments?"

"No; he hunts for his master's fleas as well."

"And you think, Michel, the young barbarian will sell a beast that is so useful to him?"

"Well, you know, sir, there's no harm in asking."

"Then we will ask him, Michel; and if he's not too unconscionable, we shall make two hearts happy."

"Sir, sir!" cried Michel at this juncture.

"Well, what now?"

"Here he comes, in the nick of time."

"Who?"

"The Auvergnat with the monkey."

And so it was. Next moment the yard-door was pushed half open and a fat face, wearing a gentle, phlegmatic expression, peeped in.

"Come in! come in!" cried Michel, imitating the uncouth Auvergnat accent with some skill.

The lad did not wait to be asked twice, but stepped in, hat in hand. His ape, perched on a box the boy carried on his back, felt bound to copy his master's politeness and took off his troubadour's cap.

He was of the same species as my recent purchase, and, like her, of the smallest breed. So far as we could judge under his fancy costume, he had a charming little person of his own, as soft and sweet and dainty as any one could desire.

"Oh!" I said to Michel, "how like he is to . . ." and I pronounced the name of a celebrated translator.

"Well and good," returned Michel, "then we've found a name for him without further searching."

"Yes; only we must use the anagram of it, you know, Michel."

"What is an anagram, eh?"

"It means," I explained, "that using the same letters, we make him another name out of them. We must beware of an action for libel, Michel."

Michel looked at me in wonder.

"But surely Monsieur can call his ape what he likes."

"I can call my ape what I like?"

"Yes, Monsieur has a perfect right to"

"I think not, Michel."

"I say Monsieur has."

"Well, anyhow, if I am fortunate enough to become the possessor of the pretty creature, we will call him *Potich.*

"Yes, let's call him Potich by all means."

"But we have not got him yet, Michel."

"Will Monsieur give me *carte blanche*?"

"Yes, you shall be armed with full powers, my man."

"Up to what sum may I go?"

"Up to forty francs."

"Leave me alone with the youngster, and I'll bring the thing off, never fear," said Michel confidently.

So I left Michel alone with the Auvergnat, as he desired, and entered the Villa Médicis, having been absent from home four days.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FOUNDLING

WHAT I find so delightful in travelling, whether for a long or short period, is that it involves two indubitable pleasures,—that of going away and that of coming back. I say nothing of the joys of the journey itself; for these are much more uncertain.

I entered the house, therefore, with a radiant face, casting happy and benignant glances from one article of furniture to another.

The furniture amid which one lives always holds something of one's own personality, some reflection of one's character and taste and inmost thoughts.

Mahogany chairs and tables, if they could speak, would certainly not tell the same tale as carved wood pieces of furniture; cabinets and sideboards of ebony the same anecdotes as similar articles of rosewood; Boule dressing-tables and secretaires as the like conveniences of walnut wood.

I was gazing then, as I have said, with a happy, benignant smile on my various household gods one after the other, when suddenly I caught sight, on a lounge by the fireside, of something that looked like a black-and-white muff, and which I did not recognise as a familiar object.

I stepped nearer, the muff was purring in the most

comfortable and contented fashion. It was a young tom-cat fast asleep.

"Madame Lamarque!" I shouted, "Madame Lamarque!"—Madame Lamarque was the cook.

"I knew very well Monsieur had come," she began, "and I should have paid my respects before, but the fact is I was making a white sauce at the moment, and Monsieur, who understands cooking himself, knows how quickly they burn."

"Yes, I know they do, Madame Lamarque; but what I don't understand is where this fresh arrival comes from,"—and I pointed a denunciatory finger at the cat."

"Oh, sir," sighed Madame Lamarque sentimentally, "'tis an Antony."

"What do you mean — an Antony, Madame Lamarque?"

"In other words, a foundling, sir."

"Ah! well, poor creature."

"I felt sure Monsieur would be interested."

"And where did you find him, Madame Lamarque?"

"In the cellar, sir."

"In the cellar?"

"Yes; I heard something going 'Mew! mew! mew!' and I said to myself, 'That must be a cat.'"

"What perspicacity!"

"Yes; and I went down, sir, and there, behind the firewood, I found the poor beast. Then I remembered how Monsieur had said once, 'Madame Lamarque, we ought to have a cat.'"

"I said that, did I? I think you are mistaken, Madame Lamarque."

"Monsieur certainly said so. Then I said to myself, 'As Monsieur wants to keep a cat, it's surely Providence sends us this one.'"

"You said that, did you, dear Madame Lamarque?"

"Yes; and I adopted him on the spot, as Monsieur can see for himself."

"Well, if you feel you *must* share your cup of coffee with a guest, you are quite at liberty, you know."

"Only, what are we to call him, sir?"

"We will call him Mysouff, if you are agreeable."

"If I am agreeable! Monsieur is master."

"Only, Madame Lamarque, you will see he does not eat my birds—my coral-beaks and Senegal wrynecks, my avadavats and Indian sparrows."

"Oh! if Monsieur fears that," struck in Michel, entering the room, "there's a way."

"A way to do what, Michel?"

"To prevent cats from eating birds."

"Tell us what it is, my good man."

"Very well, sir. You have a bird in a cage, you cover it up on three sides, you heat a wire red-hot, and fix it in the side of the cage that's not hidden; then you leave the room, leaving the cat behind. The animal looks about, examines the ground, measures his distance, crouches, and with a sudden spring comes down all four paws and nose on the red-hot wire. The hotter the wire, the better the cure."

"Thanks, Michel. . . . And about our troubadour?"

"True, true; I was forgetting that was what I came about. Well, sir, it's all settled; he'll sell Potich for forty francs, but he insists on our giving him two white mice and a guinea-pig to clinch the bargain."

"But, Michel, where the deuce do you suppose I am to get two white mice and a guinea-pig from?"

"If Monsieur will leave it to me, I know where they're to be got, I do."

"What! will I leave it to you, you say? Why, of

course I will, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you to boot."

"Then give me forty francs."

"Here they are, Michel, here they are,"—and that worthy man went off with his forty francs.

"If it is not an indiscreet question," said Madame Lamarque, "I should like to ask Monsieur what is the meaning of *Mysouff*?"

"Meaning? Why, my dear Madame Lamarque, Mysouff means Mysouff; what else should it mean?"

"It's just a cat's name then—Mysouff?"

"Of course it is; was not Mysouff called so?"

"What Mysouff?"

"Mysouff I. Ah! very true, Madame Lamarque, you never knew Mysouff."

Thereupon I fell into so deep a fit of abstraction that Madame Lamarque showed her well-known tact and discretion in waiting for another time to find out who and what was Mysouff—first of the name.

CHAPTER XVIII

MYSOUFF—FIRST OF THE NAME

DOUBTLESS, reader, you have often been in a bric-à-brac shop, where, after admiring a Dutch drawing, a Renaissance cabinet, an old Japanese vase, after examining a Venice goblet, a German beaker, after grinning at a Chinese Mandarin that wagged its head and put out its tongue, you suddenly stood rooted to the floor, your eyes fixed on some little painting hanging half hidden in a dusky corner.

From the darkness gleamed the aureole of a Madonna holding the Infant Jesus on her knees. The gracious figure recalled some tender recollection of your childhood, and you felt your heart flooded with a tide of gentle melancholy.

Then you looked back and back, farther and farther, into the past, forgetting your companions, the place where you were, and what you had come there for. The wings of memory bore you far away, you flew through space as if possessed of Mephistopheles' magic cloak, and you found yourself once more a child, full of hope and happy augury for the future, as you faced the dream of early days called up by the sight of the Blessed Madonna in the picture.

Well, this was how it was with me at this moment. The name of Mysouff had carried me back fifteen years of my life.

My mother was still alive. I still enjoyed in those days the felicity of being scolded from time to time by a loving mother's voice.

My mother was alive, and I held a post in M. le Duc d'Orléans service worth 1500 francs per annum. My duties occupied me from ten in the morning to five in the afternoon.

We lived in the Rue de l'Ouest, and we had a cat called Mysouff. The animal had clearly missed its vocation; it ought to have been born a dog.

Every morning I used to set out at half-past nine,—it took me half an hour to go from the Rue de l'Ouest to my office in the Rue Saint-Honoré, No. 216,—every morning I set out at half-past nine, to return at half-past five.

Every morning Mysouff escorted me as far as the Rue de Vaugirard, and every evening waited for me at the same point.

This was his limit, his ring of Popilius, which I never remember having seen him cross.

And the curious thing was that, on such days as some chance circumstance or casual invitation tempted me to break my dutiful habits as a son and I was not going to come back to dine at home, Mysouff, though the door was opened for his exit as usual, positively refused to obey, and lay motionless on his cushion, in the posture of a serpent biting its own tail.

It was quite different on days when I meant to return punctually. Then, if they forgot to open the door for him, Mysouff would scratch at it persistently with his claws till he got what he wanted.

Naturally enough my mother adored the faithful beast; she used to call him her barometer.

"Mysouff marks my good and bad weather," she used to tell me, the dear, loving heart; "the days

when you come, it is my 'set fair,' those when you stay away, my 'much rain.'"

Poor, sweet woman! And to think that it is only when we have lost these treasures of love that we discover how ill we appreciated them when we had them. It is only when we can see our dear ones no more that we remember we might have seen them oftener, and bitterly regret we neglected our opportunities now lost forever! . . .

Yes, I invariably found Mysouff on the look-out for me in the middle of the Rue de l'Ouest, where it emerges into the Rue de Vaugiraud, sitting up and gazing at the utmost horizon of the Rue d'Assas.

The instant he caught sight of me, he began lashing the pavement with his tail; then, as I came nearer and nearer, he would get to his feet, walk obliquely all along the line of junction with the Rue de l'Ouest, tail held high and back arched.

The moment I set foot in the Rue de l'Ouest, he used to dance about my legs just like a dog; then careering along in front, and turning back to rejoin me, he would start back for the house.

Twenty yards from the door, he would come back for a last look and then dash in full gallop. Two seconds later I would see my mother appear on the threshold.

Blessed vision, which has vanished forever from this earth; but which, I hope and trust, waits to greet me on the threshold of another door.

Yes, these were my thoughts, reader, these the memories the name of Mysouff called up in my mind. So, you see, it was excusable if I failed to give Madame Lamarque an answer.

MYSOUFF USED TO DANCE ABOUT MY LEGS LIKE A DOG

CHAPTER XIX

DORVAL'S BASKET OF FLOWERS

ONCE christened, Mysouff II enjoyed in the house all the privileges of Mysouff I.

The following Sunday, were gathered in the garden, Giraud, Maquet, my son Alexandre, and two or three other habitués of the house, when a second Auvergnat with a second monkey was announced.

"Show him in," I told Michel, and a few minutes afterwards the Auvergnat made his appearance.

On his shoulder squatted a fantastic figure, all beribboned and wearing a cap of green satin cocked over one ear, and a shepherd's crook in one hand.

"Iss it no here they puy moonkeys?" the fellow asked.

"Oh! what?" we cried in chorus.

"He's asking if it isn't here they buy monkeys," explained Michel.

"My good man," I said, "you have mistaken the house. You must take the first train back, make for the boulevard, follow it right away to the Colonne de la Bastille. There, turn to the right, or to the left, as you please, cross the Pont d'Austerlitz, and you will find yourself in front of the great gates of the Jardin des Plantes. Ask them for M. Thiers' new monkey-

house, and here's a couple of francs to cover expenses."

"Hech, sirs! but ah haf seen twa apes in a cage here a'ready," the Auvergnat persisted in his uncouth patois, "and Jean-Pierre's lad tellt me she had solt her moonkey to ane Mossoo Doamass. Sae I tellt mysel': 'Aiblins Mossoo Doamass wad like my moonkey as weel; ah wad let her haf the beastie, and nae dearer ava than Jean-Pierre's lad he sellt her nain."

"My dear fellow, I am much obliged for your kind offer, and here's a franc in token of gratitude; but I have plenty, two monkeys are enough. If I kept more, I should require another servant only to look after them."

"Sir," put in Michel, "there's Soulouque, who won't do a thing; Monsieur might put him in charge of the monkeys."

This opened quite a new perspective as to Soulouque's possible future.

Alexis, known as Soulouque, was a young Negro of thirteen or fourteen, of the finest ebony complexion, who must have originally come from Senegal or the Congo. He had been a denizen of my house for five or six years now.

Dorval, one day she came to dine with me, had brought him with her in a big basket.

"Look," she said, opening the lid, "here's something I have brought you as a present."

After removing a mass of flowers, I caught sight of something black with two great white eyes, crouching at the bottom of the hamper.

"Why!" I exclaimed, "whatever is that, eh?"

"Don't be afraid, it doesn't bite."

"But, tell me, do, what is it?"

"A Negro!"

"A Negro?"

And diving my two hands into the basket, I seized the Nigger by the shoulders, hauled him out and stuck him on his legs.

Thereupon he gave me a radiant smile with his two great, starry eyes and his thirty-two teeth as white as snow.

"Where the deuce does he come from?" I asked Dorval.

"From the Antilles, my dear man; one of my friends, on landing from there, gave him me. He has been at my house for a year now."

"I have never seen him."

"Very likely—because you never come. Why do we never see you nowadays? Come and have breakfast one day, and dinner, will you?"

"Not I; you are surrounded by a swarm of parasites who are eating you up alive."

"You are perfectly right; only it won't last much longer. At this moment, dear boy, they are licking the empty platters."

"You poor dear, good creature, what a state of things!"

"So I said to myself, looking at Alexis: 'Well, well, my lad, I am going to take you somewhere where you won't get paid perhaps any more punctually than you are here, but where you will have something to eat every day, at any rate.'"

"But what do you expect me to make of this fine fellow?"

"He is very intelligent, I do assure you, and here's a proof of it. On days when dinner is scanty and the joint is conspicuous by its absence, I do the same as Madame used, I relate stories. Well, sometimes I

look round his way, and I always see him laughing or crying, according as the tale is sad or merry. Then, I lengthen out my narrative; they all think it's to please them; but nothing of the kind, it's for Alexis. I tell myself: 'Poor boy, they are eating your dinner, they are; but they cannot eat your story.' Isn't that so, Alexis?"

Alexis nodded his head in sign of affirmation.

"You possess just the kindest heart I know, upon my word!"

"After you, my good fellow. Then you will take Alexis?"

"Yes, I will."

Then I turned to my new protégé.

"So," I said, "you come from Havanna, it seems?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what language do they talk at Havanna, my lad?"

"They talk Creole."

"So? And how do you say 'Good-day, sir,' in Creole?"

"You say, '*Good-day, sir.*'"

"And, 'Good-day, Madam'?"

"You say, '*Good-day, Madam.*'"

"Ah! then that's all right, we will talk Creole together.—Michel! Michel!" I called, and on his coming, "Look here, Michel," I said, "here's a fine fellow belongs to the house henceforth; I entrust him to your care."

Michel looked at him critically.

"Who is it did the washing for you, my lad?" he asked the Negro.

"Beg pardon?" stammered Alexis.

"I ask you what's your washerwoman's name and address; I mean to make her refund your money,

I do. She's just robbed you! Well, come along Soulouque."

So Michel carried off Alexis,—Alexis for everybody else, but for Michel Soulouque from that day forward forever.

CHAPTER XX

TOO GOOD A "CHARACTER"!

FROM that time Alexis became a regular inmate of the household.

I am strongly tempted to break my usual habit of digression and tell the rest of Alexis' history right away, and I now proceed to do so.

The lad remained in my service till the Revolution of February. The next day after the proclamation of the Republic, he walked into my study and planted himself in front of my desk.

When I got to the end of my page, I looked up, and saw his face wreathed in smiles.

"Well, Alexis," I asked, "what is it now?"

We had always gone on, by the bye, in our conversations speaking Creole.

"Monsieur is aware there are no more servants now," Alexis began.

"No, I did not know that."

"Well, sir, I inform you of the fact."

"Oh, Lord! my poor lad, but this strikes me as a very bad bit of news for you!"

"Oh no, sir! just the opposite."

"So much the better, then! What do you propose to be instead?"

"Sir, I should like to be a sailor."

"Ah! but that falls out pat, to be sure! You were

born under a lucky star, for certain. It so happens one of my friends is likely to have some influence at the Ministry of Marine."

"M. Arago, you mean?"

"Hang it, my man, you do go the pace! Will nothing content you but the Minister himself? True, he is a friend of mine too; but I was not talking of him; it's Allier I had in my mind."

"Well, sir?"

"Well, I am going to give you a line for Allier; he will enlist you, or get you enlisted, in the Navy."

I took a sheet of notepaper and wrote—

"My dear Allier,—I am sending you my servant, who has quite made up his mind to be an Admiral; I have no doubt, under your auspices, he will presently reach this exalted rank. But as we must, of course, begin at the beginning, will you, to start with, get him a berth as cabin-boy?—Yours ever, A. D."

"Here," I said to Alexis, handing him the letter, "here's your recommendation."

"Has Monsieur put the address on it?" asked Alexis, who spoke Creole, but could not write or even read that language.

"I have put the name, Alexis; the address you must find out for yourself."

"How does Monsieur suppose I can ever find it?"

"There is a certain sentence in the Bible must be your guiding star—'Search, and you shall find.'"

"Very well, I will search, sir;" and Alexis left me to myself.

Two hours later he returned, radiant; his face looked like a sun seen through a smoked glass.

"Well, and Allier?"

"Well, sir, I found him all right."

"And did he receive you nicely?"

"Nothing could be nicer. . . . He sent a lot of messages to you, sir."

"You explained to him that you did not wish to be a servant any more, and that you were sacrificing to your country the thirty francs I pay you by the month?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he said?"

"He said: 'Bring me a "character" from Dumas stating that you were a good servant to him.'"

"Oh ho!"

"And if Monsieur will give me this 'character,' well then——"

"Yes, then?"

"I think M. Allier will do something handsome for me."

"Think, Alexis; think twice."

"Think what, sir?"

"You are giving up a good place."

"But, sir, as there are no more servants now?"

"You can be an exception. . . . It is always a good thing to be amongst the exceptions, you know."

"Sir, I want to be a sailor."

"If it is your vocation, Alexis, I will not stand in the way. Look, my lad, there's your month's money, —thirty francs—and your 'character.' I need not tell you, Alexis, I have lied like a Trojan, and said you are an admirable servant."

"Thank you, sir"—and Alexis vanished like a conjuring trick.

A fortnight later Alexis' successor in office announced a sailor to see me.

"A sailor! What does that mean? I don't know any one in the Navy."

"Sir, it's a black sailor."

"Ah, it's Alexis! Show him in, Joseph."

Alexis walked in, in his cabin-boy's dress, his shiny leather cap in his hand.

"So it's you, my lad! It suits you capitally, let me tell you, your new costume."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, so now your prayers are answered, your wishes realised, your desires accomplished, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have the honour to serve the Republic."

"Yes, sir."

"Then why, why do you speak with such an air of melancholy? A sailor's first duty is to be hearty."

"The fact is I am not a sailor except now and then in my spare time, sir."

"Why, how is that?"

"I only serve the Republic after I have done serving M. Allier."

"You serve M. Allier?"

"Alas! yes."

"In what capacity, Alexis?"

"As his servant, sir."

"But I thought there were no servants any more?"

"It appears there are, sir, after all."

"But I thought you yourself were determined not to be a servant any longer?"

"Very true, that was my wish."

"Well, then?"

"It is all Monsieur's fault if I am one still."

"My fault! How do you make that out?"

"Because Monsieur gave me too good a 'character.'"

"Alexis, you are as dense as the Sphinx, my boy."

"M. Allier read the 'character' you gave me."

"Yes; and then?"

"Then he said: 'Is it all true what your master says in your praise?'—'Yes, sir,' I told him.—'Well, in view of such an excellent "character," I will take you into my own service.'"

"Oh, I see! . . . so that now you are Allier's servant?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how much does he give you a month?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"But, anyhow, you get a kick behind now and then, or a box on the ear? I know Allier; he is not the man to neglect his duty in these little matters."

"Ah! there you're right, sir; he never spares expenses, and the pay is first-rate."

"Well, Alexis, I congratulate you."

"Don't mention it, don't mention it, sir."

"And here's a five-franc piece to drink Allier's health."

"If it's all the same to Monsieur, I'd rather drink *his* health."

"Drink to whose health you please, my lad; and say all that's civil from me to Allier."

"I will not fail, sir;" and so saying, Alexis took his departure, less melancholy to the tune of five francs, but still very crestfallen.

The poor lad was more of a servant than ever; only he received no wages,—unless we are to reckon as an equivalent for the thirty francs I used to give him, the kicks behind and the boxes on the side of the head which Allier bestowed on him.

CHAPTER XXI

ALEXIS JOINS THE *GARDE MOBILE*

YOU think, perhaps, that we have finished with Alexis? Not a bit of it.

A week after the June *émeutes* I saw Alexis walk into my study once more. He had his cutlass by his side and his cap cocked over his ear.

"Oh ho! Alexis," I greeted him; "so here you are again!"

"Yes, sir."

"You look very cheerful, my lad."

"Yes, sir," grinned Alexis, showing his thirty-two ivories.

"There has been a change in your fortunes, eh?"

"Yes, sir; a great change."

"And what is it, my boy?"

"Sir, I have left M. Allier's service."

"So! But you are still serving the Republic?"

"Yes, sir; but——"

"But what, Alexis?"

"Sir, I have altered my mind about being a sailor."

"Oh, you have altered your mind, have you? And what do you want to be now, you fickle fellow?"

"Sir, I should like to join the Garde Mobile."

"The Garde Mobile, eh, Alexis?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have some reason, I suppose?"

"Sir, in the Garde Mobile one gets a medal."

"Yes, after fighting."

"Sir, I'm ready to fight, if needs be."

"Well, but, deuce take it! this is a complete change of front, my lad."

"Does Monsieur know the Colonel of the Garde Mobile?"

"Of course I do; it is Clary."

"If Monsieur would give me a letter for him——"

"I am perfectly willing."

"Only . . ." stammered Alexis, stopping and hesitating.

"Only what?"

"No 'character,' if you please, sir."

"Never fear."

I gave him a letter for Clary, this time with the address duly inscribed.

"And now," declared Alexis in the tone of the Centurion of Pharsalia saying to Cæsar: "Now you will only see me dead or victorious!"—"Now," said Alexis, "Monsieur will not see me again; or, if he does, it will be in the uniform of the Garde!"

Six weeks afterwards I did see Alexis again—wearing the uniform in question.

"Well, Alexis," I laughed, "you have not got your medal yet?"

"Ah, sir, what luck! Since I have been in the force—as if they'd done it on purpose—never another *émeute!*"

"Yes, that's their spite, no doubt, my poor lad."

"Then, worse still, they're going to disband the Garde Mobile and transfer us to the Regular Army."

The announcement was followed by a deep sigh, and Alexis rolled his great appealing eyes at me.

These demonstrations plainly signified: "Oh, if only Monsieur would take me on again as domestic! I would far rather serve him than M. Allier, or even the Republic."

I pretended to notice nothing, whether sighs or appealing looks.

"Well, now," I suggested, "if you want to go back to the Navy——"

"No, thank you, sir," said Alexis. "Just think, the vessel on which I was to have embarked, if I had not joined the Mobiles, was shipwrecked, and lost with all hands."

"What would you have, my fine fellow? Why, shipwreck's all in the way of business for a sailor."

"Oh, Lord! and I can't swim a stroke. I'd prefer to join the land forces. But all the same, if Monsieur happened to know of a place, even though it shouldn't be such a good one as yours, sir, well, I'd make it do."

"Ah, my poor lad, a week after the Revolution of February you came and told me: 'There are no more servants now,' and you found yourself mistaken. Well, it's thirty months now since the establishment of the Republic, and I tell you: 'There are no more masters now,' and I think I am *not* mistaken."

"In that case, sir, your advice is to stick to my soldiering?"

"That is my advice; and what's more, I don't see what else you *can* do."

Alexis heaved a sigh twice as despondent as the first.

"I see I must just resign myself to circumstances," he said.

"Yes, I really think, my boy, that is the best thing you can do."

"Well, I suppose I must," he groaned, and left the room with anything but an air of resignation.

Three months afterwards I received a letter bearing the postmark of Ajaccio. As I did not know a living soul there, I could not think who my correspondent could be writing from Napoleon's birthplace.

The best way to satisfy my curiosity was obviously to open the letter, which I accordingly did. Glancing at the end, I read the signature—Alexis!

How came it that Alexis, whom I had parted from in Paris unable to write, was now inditing an epistle to me from Ajaccio? This I should probably find out from the letter itself; so I proceeded to read it—

"SIR,—I am writing to you, my former master and kind protector, by the hand of our quartermaster-sergeant, to tell you that I am in a hole of a country where there's nothing for a fellow to do,—except the girls, who are pretty enough; but you can't say a word to them, because everybody is a relation of everybody else in the place, and if you don't marry the wench afterwards, they're sure to murder you. This they call the vendetta.

"So, sir, if you could get me home from this hole of a place, where it's as much as your life's worth to go near a bush, and you're just eaten up with vermin, you would be doing a fine service to your poor Alexis, who asks you the favour in good, kind Madame Dorval's name. She was so fond of you, and I see by the papers we have had the misfortune to lose her.

"I don't think this would be very difficult, if you would see to it a bit; not being a highly efficient soldier, I believe my officers would not be very unwilling to let me off. In that case, you would have to apply to my Colonel, whose address you will find below.

"There will be no trouble about knowing me from

your description, as I am the only Negro in the Regiment.

"As for getting back to Paris, never fear, sir. Once I have my discharge, they'll give me a free passage to Toulon or Marseilles. Once landed in France, I can make my way to Paris *cum pedibus et jambibus*—which the quartermaster-sergeant tells me means on my own ten toes.

"Now, sir, if I were lucky enough to be taken back again into your house, I give you my solemn promise I will serve you for nothing, if necessary—and serve you better, I make bold to say, than when you paid me thirty francs a month.

"But if, in your anxiety to see me sooner, you would care to send me a trifle of money, so as not to have to take leave of my comrades like a sneak and a skunk, why, it would be very welcome, to drink to your good health, sir, and to make the journey a bit easier to manage.

"I am and shall always be, my good and kind master, your obedient and devoted servant,

"ALEXIS"

Here followed the Colonel's address.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

YOU have guessed, reader, what I did, have you not?

I went to the Ministry of War and asked to see my dear, good friend Charras; I begged him to back up my request to the Colonel, to whom I wrote then and there, using the official notepaper of the Ministry. I enclosed with it an order for fifty francs, to be spent partly in drinking my health, partly in "making the journey a bit easier."

This done, I waited developments with the calm satisfaction of a man conscious of having done a good action.

Six weeks later, I beheld Alexis once more on the threshold of my study.

"Well," I greeted him as usual, "so here you are again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your mind is made up to enter my service for board, lodging, and clothing only?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will never ask me for a penny?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I will take you back on these conditions."

"Ah! I knew Monsieur would," cried Alexis, beaming with delight.

"One moment, my boy; don't imagine I am taking you back because I cannot do without you. You would be mightily mistaken if you did, Alexis."

"I am quite aware Monsieur does this out of pure goodness of heart, and nothing else."

"Bravo! Now, what have you learnt in foreign parts?"

"To make cartridge grease, to pipeclay buff-belts and keep the muskets clean. If Monsieur will give me charge of his guns, he'll see what I can do."

"I will do better than that, Alexis. I will give you charge of myself."

"What! I'm to come back as Monsieur's valet?"

"Yes, Alexis; for valets are still in existence, it seems; though I keep none myself any longer. Go and hunt up your old livery, and get to work."

"But where can my old livery have got to, sir?"

"Oh, *I* don't know! Search, my lad, search. It's like Allier's address, there's only the Bible precept can give you any hope of finding."

Alexis left the room to start his search. He soon came back in triumph, carrying the livery in his hand.

"Monsieur," he began, "to begin with, it's all moth-eaten; and in the second place, I can't get into it any more."

"The deuce, Alexis! What's to be done?"

"Doesn't Monsieur still employ the same tailor?" Alexis asked.

"No, he is dead, and I have not yet appointed a successor."

"The deuce! as Monsieur says, what's to be done?"

"Go and ask my son to give you the address of his tailor, and look in my wardrobe for something to suit you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Meantime, keep on your uniform, my lad. Only get rid of that sort of tin quiver you wear over your shoulder, or at any rate empty the arrows out of it; else folks will take you for Cupid."

"It's not arrows in it, sir; it's my discharge."

"Ah, well, empty it anyway."

Three or four days later there walked into my room a gentleman of fashion in a pair of light green trousers with a grey check, a black frock-coat, a waistcoat of white piqué and a cambric cravat. On top of all appeared Alexis' black face.

I hardly knew him.

"Why, what's that thing I see?" I asked.

"It's only me, sir."

"Why, has a Russian Princess fallen in love with you, then?"

"No, sir."

"Then where did you get all those fine clothes, eh?"

"Why, Monsieur told me—'Go and look in my wardrobe for something to suit you.'"

"And you looked?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you found?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, come here, closer."

"Here I am, sir."

"But, God forgive me! it's my new trousers, Alexis!"

"Yes, sir."

"But, the devil take me! it's my new coat, Alexis!"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, really, you *are* the deuce of a fellow!"

"Why do you say that, sir?"

"Why? Why, you go and take my very best clothes? Well, really! . . . and what about me?"

"I IMAGINED MONSIEUR WOULD LIKE ME TO BE HANDSOMELY DRESSED"

"Why, I thought, as Monsieur sits at work all day long——"

"Yes?"

"I thought, as Monsieur never leaves the house——"

"Well?"

"I thought Monsieur would not mind about being finely dressed."

"Upon my word!"

"While for me, who go out so much——"

"So?"

"Who run on all the errands——"

"What next?"

"Who is fond of the ladies——"

"Coxcomb!"

"I imagined Monsieur would like me to be handsomely dressed."

"Oh! you imagined that, did you?"

"Give him your decorations into the bargain, sir," grinned Michel, who came in at that moment. "Then they'll all take him for heir-apparent of His Majesty King Faustin I—and the thing will be complete!"

"But meantime I have neither coats nor trousers to wear myself."

"Oh yes, you have, sir! there are the old ones."

After all, Alexis was more reasonable than many of his betters. I have known so many people in the course of my life who have appropriated my new duds, and have not so much as left me the old!

CHAPTER XXIII

ALEXIS FINDS SCOPE FOR HIS MILITARY PROCLIVITIES AT LAST

ANYWAY, my new coat and trousers being no longer available, I had a twofold motive for staying at home, and my work was naturally benefited.

Thereupon I told myself: "This poor lad Alexis *thinks* he is serving me for nothing; well, it is only fair his self-respect should be consulted, as his pecuniary interests are being jeopardised."

I have underlined the word *thinks*; for I trust you know me too well, dear readers, to suppose for an instant that he was really giving his services gratis.

I wanted to see what difference there was between Alexis receiving thirty francs a month and Alexis acting as my servant unpaid. I am bound to say in common justice to him that there was none whatever.

However, I proposed, at a given time, to make Alexis a *refund*, as they say in the Government offices.

Now you know, or possibly you do not know, that on December 7, 1852, I left Paris for Brussels. Alexis accompanied me, and I took up my quarters at the Hôtel de l'Europe.

There I had all the hotel waiters to do anything I wanted—and this proved Alexis' undoing.

I knew Brussels from of old, and felt no curiosity to explore the city again. So I set to work without a moment's delay directly I arrived.

But Alexis had never been in the Belgian capital before, and had a strong desire to see its beauties. The result was that, having nothing else to do, he undertook a series of linguistic studies by way of comparing the French, Belgian, and Creole tongues.

He was still engaged in these studies when it occurred to me to give up living at an hotel and rent and furnish a small house instead. I did this accordingly; but by the time I entered into possession of my new quarters, Alexis had become so enamoured of his new pursuits that he invariably left the house at eight o'clock in the morning, came back at eleven for *déjeuner*, went out again at noon, returning at six, and out again at seven and finally home and to bed at midnight.

Finally, one day I confronted him when he came in at one of these times, and told him—

"Alexis, I am going to give you a piece of news you will be glad to hear. My lad, I have just engaged a servant to attend to us. Only don't take him away with you when you go out."

Alexis looked at me with his great, soft eyes, in which there was not the faintest gleam of ill-nature.

"I quite understand," he said; "Monsieur discharges me."

"Please observe, Alexis, I have not said one word about dismissal."

"Oh! I'm ready to admit one thing——"

"What is that, Alexis?"

"I can see for myself I don't suit Monsieur."

"If you say so yourself, Alexis, I am too good a master to contradict you."

"Then my mind is made up."

"It is always something gained to have made up one's mind."

"There's no doubt about it, sir, my vocation is to be a soldier."

"I will say to you what Louis Philippe did to M. Dupin: 'I always thought as you do, my dear sir; but I never durst tell you so."

"When does Monsieur wish me to go?"

"Fix your own time, Alexis."

"As soon as ever Monsieur has given me something to pay my journey with."

"Here's fifty francs."

"How much is the ticket to Paris, sir?"

"Twenty-five francs, Alexis; for I presume you don't intend to travel first-class."

"Oh no, sir, no!—So I shall have twenty-five francs over."

"You will have more than that left, Alexis."

"Why, how much shall I have left?"

"You will have four hundred and fifty francs plus twenty-five francs,—total, four hundred and seventy-five francs."

"I don't understand, sir."

"You have been in my service for fifteen months; very well, fifteen months at thirty francs a month makes exactly four hundred and fifty francs."

"But," stammered Alexis, blushing through his black skin, "I thought I was serving Monsieur for nothing?"

"Well, then, you were mistaken, Alexis. It was only a way of making you save up a trifle in spite of yourself. If you choose to travel on foot, and buy yourself an annuity with the four hundred and seventy-five francs you own, you will have twenty-three francs seventy-five centimes a year."

"And Monsieur is really going to give me four hundred and seventy-five francs?"

"Certainly I am."

"But it can't be."

"What! can't be?—what do you mean, Alexis?"

"No, sir. Why, sir, you owed me nothing, even if I had been a good servant to you; so you can't possibly owe me four hundred and seventy-five francs for being a bad one."

"But it is so, all the same. *And* let me tell you, Alexis, the Belgian laws are very strict, and if you refuse to take your wages I can force you to."

"I should not like to bring an action against Monsieur, that's certain; I know Monsieur hates going to law."

"Then be reasonable, Alexis; take your four hundred and seventy-five francs."

"I will propose a compromise—if Monsieur will allow me."

"Very well; I want nothing better than to come to some agreement, Alexis."

"If Monsieur gives me the whole sum at once, I shall spend it right away."

"That's extremely likely."

"Whereas, if Monsieur would be so kind as to give me an order to receive fifty francs a month on M. Cadot, his publisher——"

"An excellent plan, Alexis."

"I shall have money for eight months to live like a prince on; presently, when the ninth month comes, I will take a place, and still have the seventy-five francs to draw upon."

"By the Lord, Alexis, I did not know you were such a financier!"

So I handed Alexis twenty-five francs in ready

money to pay for his ticket, and an order on Cadot as desired.

This arranged, he begged me for my blessing, and set out for Paris.

In the next eight months Alexis was to be seen at all hours on the Boulevards, where he was known by the sobriquet of the *Black Prince*.

Finally, in the ninth month, he sought and found employment as he had proposed.

Let us add at once that this time Alexis had discovered his true vocation, as is shown by the following letter, which I received from him two years after his departure—

"SIR,—The present communication is to inquire, first of all, after my dear master's health, and secondly, to inform you that I am as happy and prosperous as can be. I have made great progress with the foils, and have just been admitted as Assistant in a Fencing School. Monsieur probably does not know that, in reaching this preferment, it is customary to treat one's comrades.

"I know Monsieur too well to suppose I need tell him this twice—*it is the custom to treat the other fellows*.

"Believe me, sir, I am eternally grateful for past favours.—Your devoted ALEXIS"

Alexis duly treated "the other fellows" at my expense. I don't mean to say he gave them a Trimalchio's feast or a dinner of Monte-Cristo, but he entertained them adequately.

To-day Alexis enjoys his comrades' goodwill and the respect of his superiors, to whom I recommend him as one of the best and truest hearts I know.

Unfortunately there is one thing will always prove an obstacle to his advancement—the fact that he cannot either read or write.

In former days the Emperor created a rank especially for gallant fellows in his position, where book learning was not required. He made them ensign-bearers; that was *their* marshal's bâton.

Such, dear readers, is Alexis' story. Now we must hark back to the second Auvergnat and his *moonkey* number two.

CHAPTER XXIV

MAQUET BUYS A SECOND HUSBAND FOR MADEMOISELLE DESGARCINS

YOU will remember, reader, how the Auvergnat lad urged me eagerly to buy his ape, and how I objected, telling him that, if I made the purchase, I should want a special servant merely to look after the monkeys.

It was then that Michel, always a man of resource, proposed I should appoint Soulouque superintendent of the monkey-house; and this name of Soulouque led me to give the information about Alexis which you have just perused.

His story completed, I now resume the thread of my general narrative.

"And how much do you want for your monkey?" I asked the Auvergnat.

"The shentleman knows hersel' what price she haf paid for the other moonkey."

"I gave forty francs for the other one, a guinea-pig, and two white mice."

"Come now, buy the pretty little beast!" urged Giraud.

"Yes, do buy the wretched ape!" said Alexandre.

"Listen to them, just listen to them! the dear creatures! I tell you, forty francs *is* forty francs. And as for the guinea-pig and two white mice, they are not to be found in the first field neither!"

"Gentlemen," struck in Alexandre, "there's one thing I mean to prove one day—that my father is the most avaricious of mankind!"

Everybody protested violently; but my son persisted: "Yes, I shall prove it one day."

"There, what a pity not to buy," persisted Giraud; "see what a little love it is!"—and he held out his arms to the monkey, which threw itself into them and gripped him tight round the neck.

"More by token," observed Michel, "he's as like as two drops of water to your neighbour, sir, and you know——"

"'Pon honour, but it's true!" exclaimed the company in chorus.

"Capital!" Giraud began again; "what could be better? Why, I have a portrait to paint of him for Versailles. . . . Upon my word! you *might* buy him, and he could pose for the head; that would help me on with my work enormously."

"Come, buy, buy!" chorused all my friends.

"Well, are my father's niggardly habits proved, or are they not?" grinned Alexandre.

"My dear Dumas," said Maquet, "without meaning to say I agree with your son, may I be allowed to offer you the 'Last of the Laidmanoirs' as a present?"

"Bravo, Maquet! bravo, sir!" shouted everybody; "give the skinflint a lesson."

I bowed, and, "My dear, good Maquet," I said, "you know whatever comes from you is welcome here."

"He accepts!" sneered Alexandre, "there, you see, gentlemen."

"Accept! of course I accept.—Now, my young Auvergnat friend, kiss your *moonkey* for the last time, and if you have a tear to shed, now's the time."

"And ma forty francs, ma guinea-pig, and ma white mice?"

"The whole company guarantees your payment."

"Come, gif me back ma *moonkey*," said the Auvergnat, holding out his arms to Giraud.

"There," laughed Alexandre, "there you see the fine trustfulness of youth!"

Maquet drew two gold coins from his pocket.

"Look," he said, "there's the main item, to begin with."

"And the guinea-pig and the white mice?" persisted the suspicious Auvergnat.

"Oh, as for them," said Maquet, "I can only offer you their value in money. How much do you reckon a guinea-pig and two white mice at?"

"I think they mak ten francs."

"Hold your tongue, you young humbug!" cried Michel. "A franc the guinea-pig and a franc and a quarter apiece the white mice, that makes three francs and a half altogether. Give the fellow five francs, Monsieur Maquet; and if he's not satisfied, I'll settle accounts with him myself."

"Ach! but ye're a hard man, gardener!"

"There, take your five francs," said Maquet, handing him the money.

"Now," added Michel, "rub your two noses together and let that be the end!"

The Auvergnat stepped up to Giraud, his arms open; but instead of springing into his late master's arms, the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" clung on to Giraud's beard, uttering little yells of terror and making faces at the Auvergnat.

"Good!" said Alexandre, "that is the last straw of all; so monkeys are ungrateful too. Pay him quick, Maquet, quick; else he'll be wanting to charge as if for a man."

Maquet handed over the balance of five francs, and the Auvergnat made for the door.

As the latter disappeared the "Last of the Laid-manoirs" gave more and more manifest tokens of satisfaction. When he had vanished altogether, the monkey indulged in a sort of war-dance indicative of triumph and delight.

"Look, look!" cried Giraud, "look there!"

"Well, we are looking with all our eyes."

"No, no, not there! Look in the cage; see what Mademoiselle Desgarcins is after."

The latter, not in the least intimidated by the shepherd's costume worn by the new-comer, was enthusiastically dancing back at him with might and main.

"Let us not delay any longer the bliss of these two interesting and fascinating creatures," said Maquet.

CHAPTER XXV

MADEMOISELLE DESGARCINS AND THE SODA-WATER BOTTLE

I CAN honestly say there never was anything more grotesque in this world than the nuptials of Mademoiselle Desgarcins, all in the sweet simplicity of her naked monkeyhood, with the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," in shepherd costume, the ceremony presided over by Potich dressed as troubadour.

Potich, we should add, appeared greatly chagrined at the event. In fact, if he had still worn the famous sword which he was flourishing in the face of his master the day I first made his acquaintance, it is likely enough that, taking advantage of Article 324 of the Penal Code, he might, as an injured husband wronged within the walls of the conjugal domicile, have washed out the affront in the blood of the "Last of the Laidmanoirs."

But fortunately Potich was unarmed, and the hostile demonstration he did make being answered by a terrific volley of blows from the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," things took their course.

Not that Potich was one of those accommodating husbands who wink at what goes on under their eyes. Far from it; indeed the grief and chagrin Potich endured in his internal economy brought about his death eighteen months later.

At this stage of affairs Alexis appeared on the scene, bringing in a tray with three or four glasses, a bottle of Chablis, and a bottle of soda-water."

"Look here," cried Alexandre, "I have an idea."

"Yes?"

"To make Mademoiselle Desgarcins uncork the soda-water."

Then, without so much as waiting for the company to approve his notion, he took the soda-water bottle and laid it on the floor of the cage in the position of a gun on its gun-carriage.

The saying goes—"As inquisitive as a monkey," and as a matter of fact Alexandre had hardly withdrawn his hand and arm from the cage before the three droll creatures, the lady included, were squatted round the strange object, scrutinising it curiously.

Mademoiselle was the first to realise that the moving mechanism, whatever it was, was centred in the four crossed strings that held the cork in place.

Accordingly she attacked the string with her fingers; but these, strong and clever as they were, could make nothing of it.

Then she had recourse to her teeth. This time it was a different matter; after a few seconds of tugging and tearing the string gave way, still leaving three intact, however.

Mademoiselle instantly set to work again and attacked the second.

Meantime her two companions, squatting on their rumps to right and left of her, looked on with ever-growing curiosity.

The second string gave way; but the remaining two were underneath towards the ground.

Potich and the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," their differences made up for the moment apparently, took

hold of the bottle with the utmost adroitness and turned it over, so that the two last strings were upwards.

Without a moment's loss of time, Mademoiselle fell to on the third string. Then, the third having given way, she went on to the fourth.

The nearer the operation approached completion, the more intense grew the attention of all; the spectators, needless to say, being as keenly interested as the actors. Animals and human beings held their breath with one accord.

Suddenly a terrible explosion was heard. Mademoiselle Desgarcins was pitched head over heels by the cork and smothered with soda-water, while Potich and the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" sprang to the roof of their cage, uttering piercing screams.

In all these apish antics, so curiously mimicking human emotions, there was a *vis comica* that is altogether indescribable.

"Oh!" laughed Alexandre, "I'll give up my share of soda-water to see Mademoiselle Desgarcins uncork a second bottle."

Meanwhile Mademoiselle Desgarcins had picked herself up, shaken herself, and gone to join her two friends at the top of the cage, where they still hung head downwards by their tails, giving vent to a succession of apish yells.

"And to think young Dumas imagines she will let herself be fooled a second time!"

"Upon my word!" said Maquet, "I should not be a bit surprised; I think curiosity is stronger even than fear."

"Pooh! so long as you'll go on giving them soda-water bottles, so long they'll go on uncorking them; they are just as obstinate as mules, are monkeys!"

MADEMOISELLE DESGARCIS OPENS THE SODA WATER BOTTLE

"You think so, Michel?"

"Monsieur knows how they catch them in their own country?"

"No, Michel, I do not."

"What! Monsieur doesn't know that?" exclaimed Michel in the tone of one filled with compassion at the thought of my ignorance.

"Tell us about it, Michel."

"Monsieur is aware that monkeys are extremely fond of Indian corn?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, they put some Indian corn in a bottle, the neck of which is just wide enough to admit the monkey's paw."

"Good, Michel! and then?"

"They can see the Indian corn through the sides of the bottle."

"Yes, Michel? Go on."

"They dive their paw down the neck and pick up a fistful of the grain. At that moment the layer of the trap shows himself. They are so obstinate—the monkeys——"

"Yes, I understand."

"They are so obstinate, they'll never let go anything they've once grasped; but as the paw, that went in all right when the fingers were open, refuses to be drawn out again with the fist closed, they're caught like that, sir, in the act."

"Well and good, Michel; so, if ever our monkeys run away, you know how to catch them again."

"Oh, Monsieur need not be the least afraid, that's exactly what I *shall* do."

Then, "Alexis," Michel called to my Negro servant, "bring another bottle of soda-water."

We are bound to add, in the interests of truth, that

the experiment was repeated a second time, and even a third, under exactly the same conditions and circumstances—to the glorification of Michel's perspicacity.

Alexandre was for going on; but I pointed out that poor Mademoiselle Desgarcins' nose was all swelled up, her gums bleeding, and her eyes starting out of her head.

"Bah! it isn't that," sneered Alexandre, "but because you want to save your soda-water. I told you so, gentlemen; my father, while posing as a spendthrift, is really at heart the most niggardly of men."

CHAPTER XXVI

INFAMOUS CONDUCT OF *POTICH*, THE "LAST OF THE LAIDMANOIRS," MADEMOISELLE DESGARCINS, AND MYSOUFF II

THE reader must forgive this long digression. We now come at last to Mysouff II.

One morning, after having worked till three o'clock a.m., I was still in bed at eight, when I heard my door open softly.

I have mentioned before that no matter how gently my door is opened and how soundly I am asleep, I awake without fail the instant it begins to turn on its hinges.

I opened my eyes, therefore, almost before the latch was raised, and as it was broad daylight, I could catch a glimpse of Michel's face between door and doorpost. He was evidently in trouble.

"Well, sir," he began, "here's a calamity!"

"Why, what's wrong, Michel?"

"Wrong indeed! Why, those wretched monkeys—I can't think how ever they did it—have managed to untwist a mesh of the wire, and then another and another, till they made a hole big enough to squeeze through, and they are clean gone!"

"Well! but, Michel, you know the accident has been provided against. We have only to get three bottles and buy some Indian corn."

"Yes, yes, Monsieur will have his joke; but he'll find it's no joke directly."

"Why, good lord, Michel! what else has happened, eh?"

"What else! Why, they've opened the aviary."

"And the birds have flown? Well, so much the worse for us, Michel, but so much the better for them."

"Ah, sir! your six pairs of ring-doves, your fourteen quails, and your little, rare birds—Indian sparrows, wrynecks, coralbeaks, widow-birds, and all the rest are gobbled up."

"But, Michel, the monkeys cannot have eaten my birds?"

"No, sir; but they've been and fetched a gentleman who did the job for them—M. Mysouff, to wit."

"Oh, the devil! We must look into this."

"Oh, it's a pretty sight truly—a regular field of carnage!"

I sprang out of bed, slipped on my *pantalon à pieds*, and was ready to sally forth.

"Wait a bit," said Michel, "let's just see where they've got to, the villains."

I went to the window, which gave on the garden, and looked out.

Potich was swinging gracefully to and fro, hanging by the tail to the branch of a maple.

Mademoiselle Desgarcins was still inside the aviary, and was leaping merrily from east to west and north to south.

As for the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," that noble animal was doing gymnastics on the conservatory door.

"Well, Michel, the question now is to catch them all again. I will undertake the 'Last of the Laidmanoirs,' if you will see to Mademoiselle Desgarcins. As for

little Potich, when he finds he is the only one left he'll come back of his own accord."

"Oh, sir, don't you trust him! He's a vile hypocrite. Why, he's made it up with the other fellow."

"What! with Mademoiselle Desgarcins' lover?"

"Yes, yes, indeed!"

"Tut, tut! it makes me despair of the simian race; I thought such baseness was only done amongst human beings."

"We mustn't look upon these as mere monkeys," said Michel; "you see, they've enjoyed the benefits of intercourse with men."

"Oh, but it's sad to think they should be so depraved; and sadder still, Michel, to reflect that perhaps it's our plays and romances, Victor Hugo's and mine, that have done the mischief! However, be this as it may, our first business is to catch them."

"Very true, sir, very true."

"To work then, Michel!" I cried—and to work we went.

Certain preliminary measures were necessary before we could reach the delinquents, and these precautions we proceeded to take, taking up the best strategical positions like true sportsmen. By the time the simple-minded Potich, who appeared to have been placed as sentinel by his two accomplices, gave the alarm, it was too late. I was master of the door of the conservatory and Michel of that of the aviary. I marched into the conservatory, and shut to the door behind me.

Seeing the door blocked, the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" did not even attempt to fly, but made ready to defend himself.

He retreated into a corner so as to have his flanks and rear protected, and began to grind his teeth in a threatening manner.

I considered myself too well practised in the three great arts of fencing, boxing, and the *savate* to be greatly alarmed at the thought of a duel with a monkey.

I walked straight up to the animal, which, as I came nearer and nearer, redoubled his hostile demonstrations.

Potich had run up from the end of the garden and was hopping up and down, peeping through the glass to see what was going to occur between me and the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," all the while making strange little throat-cries by way of encouraging the latter. On the other hand he treated me, his master, to a succession of hideous grimaces, pretending to spit in my face through the panes.

At this moment the she-monkey gave vent to a series of piercing screams, of which Michel was the inciting cause; he had just clapped his hands on her.

Her outcries seemed to exasperate the "Last of the Laidmanoirs." He gathered himself together, and then flew straight at my face like a bolt from a cross-bow.

Instinctively I parried in *carte*; my fist met the creature's body full in the chest, and knocked him flat against the wall.

The shock was so violent that the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" lay for a moment half stunned.

I took advantage of the respite to grip him by the skin of his neck. The creature's features, red and congested a moment before, were now as pale as a death-mask.

"Have you secured Mademoiselle Desgarcins?" I shouted to Michel.

"Have you got the 'Last of the Laidmanoirs,' sir?" Michel shouted back to me.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Bravo, then!"—and we marched out, each holding our prisoner in hand, while Potich scuttled off to the top of the only tree the garden boasted, uttering pitiful cries, only comparable to the lamentations of Electra.

CHAPTER XXVII

A WAGER

IN the meantime a smith had been sent for, who proceeded to repair the broken wires of the monkey-house. Then Mademoiselle Desgarcins and the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" were put back again after being soundly whipped.

The sight of their punishment brought Potich's lamentations to the highest pitch of agony. At last, unlikely as it may seem, and proving the natural aptitude of monkeys—who are men's caricatures in this as in so many points—for slavery, once the two culprits were safe in confinement again, Potich came down from his tree of his own accord, sidled timidly up to Michel, and asked with little plaintive whimpers and hands clasped in pitiful appeal, to be reimprisoned along with his comrades.

"There, do you see that?" cried Michel. "Oh, the hypocrite!"

But was it hypocrisy or devotion? I was inclined to think the latter; Michel held out for the former.

In very truth, what better had Regulus done, when he went back to Carthage to keep his plighted word; or King Jean, surrendering himself again to the English, to rejoin the Countess of Salisbury?

Potich was forgiven in consideration of his repentance. Michel picked the little beast up by the scruff

of his neck and tossed him into the cage, without the "Last of the Laidmanoirs" or Mademoiselle Desgarcins deigning to pay the slightest attention to his arrival. When a she-monkey is not in love, she seems to be every whit as cruel as a woman.

Mysouff remained to be attended to. So far he had been overlooked, and still inside the aviary, he was still chewing the bones of his unhappy victims with the callous indifference of a hardened criminal.

He had enjoyed, like the Vicomte de V——, a breakfast costing five hundred francs.

"A breakfast costing five hundred francs!" the reader will exclaim. "Why, what ever do you mean; we fail to grasp the allusion."

Well, to explain: the Vicomte de V——, brother to Comte Horace de V——, and one of the most finished gourmets in France,—and not only in France, but in Europe, not only in Europe, but in all the world,—one day ventured to propound at a gathering, half artistic, half society, the startling statement—

"One man by himself can eat a dinner costing five hundred frances."

A universal shout of incredulity greeted the remark. "Impossible!" was heard on all sides.

"It is understood, of course," added the Vicomte, "that the word *eat* is taken to include the word *drink* as well."

"Why, of course."

"Well, then, I maintain that a man,—and when I say *a man*, I do not mean a common yokel, you know, but a gourmet, a disciple of Montrond or Courchamp,—well, I say that a man, a gourmet of the sort I mean, is capable of eating a dinner costing five hundred francs."

"You could do it yourself, for instance?"

"Certainly I could."

"Will you wager you could?"

"By all means."

"I will hold the stakes," said one of the bystanders.

"Yes, and I will eat them," declared the Vicomte.

"Come, then, let us settle the details."

"It is all as simple as can be. . . . I will dine at the Café de Paris, arrange my menu as I please, and consume five hundred francs' worth of dinner."

"Without leaving anything over in the dishes or on your plate?"

"Excuse me, I shall leave the bones."

"That is only fair."

"And when is the wager to be decided?"

"To-morrow, if you like."

"Then, you won't eat any breakfast?"

"I shall breakfast just as usual."

"Well and good; for to-morrow, then, at seven o'clock, at the Café de Paris."

The same evening, the Vicomte de V—— went to dine as usual at the fashionable restaurant. Then, after the meal, so as not to be biased by any pangs of hunger, he set to work to draw up his menu for the following day.

The maître d'hôtel was summoned. It was mid-winter. The Vicomte ordered several kinds of fruit and spring vegetables, as well as game, which was out of season.

The maître d'hôtel demanded a week's delay to obtain these delicacies; and the dinner was accordingly postponed for that time.

To right and left of the Vicomte's table the judges of the wager were to sit and dine. He was allowed two hours for the meal—from seven to nine. He might talk, or not, just as he pleased.

At the appointed hour the Vicomte walked in, bowed to the umpires, and took his seat.

The menu had been kept secret; the Vicomte's opponents were to be given the gratification of the unexpected.

When he was duly installed, twelve dozen Ostend oysters were set on the table, together with a half bottle of Johannisberg.

The Vicomte was in form; he called for a second gross of oysters and another half bottle of the same vintage.

Next came a tureen of swallows'-nest soup, which the Vicomte poured into a bowl and drank off.

"Upon my word! gentlemen," he said, "I have a fine appetite to-day, and I feel greatly tempted to indulge a fancy."

"By all means! you are at liberty to do exactly as you like."

"I adore beefsteak and potatoes.—Here, waiter, a beefsteak and potatoes."

The man looked at the Vicomte in wonder.

"Well," added the latter, "don't you understand what I say?"

"Yes, sir, yes! but I thought M. le Vicomte had settled his menu."

"True, true; but this is an extra, I will pay for it separately."

The umpires looked at one another. The dish was brought, and the Vicomte devoured it to the last scrap.

"Good! . . . and now the fish"—and the fish was set on the table.

"Gentlemen," observed the Vicomte, "it is a *ferra* from the Lake of Geneva, a fish only to be found there. Still it *can* be procured. I was shown it this morning as I sat at breakfast; it was then alive. It had been

conveyed from Geneva to Paris swimming in Lake water. I can recommend the dish ; it is excellent."

Five minutes more and only the fish bones remained on the Vicomte's plate.

"The pheasant, waiter!" cried the Vicomte—and a truffled pheasant was duly served.

"Another bottle of bordeaux, same vintage"—and the second bottle was produced.

The bird was disposed of in ten minutes.

"Monsieur," remarked the waiter at this point, "surely you have made a mistake in asking for the truffled pheasant before the stewed ortolans."

"Egad! but that's so. Luckily, it is not stipulated in what order the courses are to come; else I should have lost my bet. Now for the ortolans, waiter!"

There were ten, and the Vicomte made just ten mouthfuls of them.

"Gentlemen," said the Vicomte, "my menu is a very plain one now,—asparagus, green peas, a pineapple, and a dish of strawberries. For wine—a half bottle of constantia, a half bottle of sherry, East Indian, you know. Then, of course, to finish up with, the usual coffee and liqueurs."

Each item appeared in due course—fruits and vegetables, all was eaten conscientiously, wines and liqueurs, all was drunk to the last drop.

The Vicomte had taken an hour and fourteen minutes over his dinner.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, turning to the umpires, "has everything been done honestly and above-board?"

The judges answered unanimously in the affirmative.

"Waiter, the bill!"

Observe, people did not use the word *addition* in those days, as they do now.

The Vicomte glanced at the total, and handed in the document to the judges.

It read as follows :—

	Frs.
Ostend oysters, 24 dozen	30
Swallows'-nest soup	150
Beefsteak and potatoes	2
Truffled pheasant	40
Stewed ortolans	50
Asparagus	15
Green peas	12
Pineapple	24
Strawberries	20
WINES AND LIQUEURS	
Johannisberg, one bottle	24
Bordeaux, best quality, two bottles	50
Constantia, half bottle	40
Sherry (East Indian), half bottle	50
Coffee and liqueurs	1.50
Total	508 frs. 50

This total was duly verified and found correct.

The account was carried to the Vicomte's adversary, who was dining in a private room. In five minutes' time he appeared, bowed to the Vicomte, drew from his pocket six bank-notes of a thousand francs, and handed them to him. This was the amount of the bet.

"Oh, sir," said the Vicomte, "there was no hurry about it; besides, you would perhaps have liked to have your revenge."

"Should you feel inclined to give it me, sir?"

"By all means."

"When?"

"Why," replied the Vicomte, with sublime simplicity, "now, at once, sir, if you wish."

The loser pondered deeply for a few seconds.

"Ah, no, upon my word!" he said at last; "after what I have seen, I think you are capable of anything."

CHAPTER XXVIII

TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF MYSOUFF

WE left Mysouff gloating over the mangled remains of his feathered victims, and his capture presented little difficulty. By merely shutting the door of the aviary we had the culprit at the disposition of justice.

The only question was to decide his fate. Michel voted to shoot him straight away. I opposed such a step, which seemed too violent altogether.

I proposed to wait for the coming Sunday and have Mysouff brought to trial before the friends who always visited me on that day.

In addition to the regular weekly habitués of the house, we could invite others specially for the occasion. This was accordingly done, and judgment postponed till the fateful Sunday.

Meantime Mysouff remained a prisoner on the very scene of his crime. Michel removed the last vestiges of the dead birds on which he was feeding without a touch of compunction. He was put on a diet of bread and water, Michel constituting himself his gaoler.

When Sunday came, both the ordinary weekly habitués and the specially invited guests having turned up in force, the necessary quorum for a jury was more than provided.

Michel was nominated Procureur-Général, and Nogent Saint-Laurent official Counsel for the Defence.

I am bound to say the minds of the jury were manifestly predisposed against the prisoner, and that after the Public Prosecutor's speech, a sentence of death seemed a practical certainty,

But the clever advocate to whom poor Mysouff's defence had been entrusted, taking the accusation in the most serious way and calling all his eloquence into play, insisted on the animal's innocent intentions contrasted with the mischievousness of the monkeys, on the absence of initiation on the part of the four-footed as compared with two-handed vertebrates. He demonstrated how, closely approximating to men as they did, the latter were bound to be full of criminal promptings. He showed Mysouff incapable by himself of meditating such a crime. He showed him sleeping the sleep of the just; then suddenly awakened from his harmless slumbers by the odious apes that had long been watching the aviary intent on committing murder. He described Mysouff, still only half awake, stretching his paws, purring softly the while, opening his little pink mouth and showing his pretty tongue; listening, then shaking his ears,—a plain sign that he rejected the odious proposal his tempters dared to make; at first refusing all participation in the foul deed (the speaker asserted positively that his client had begun by refusing); then, young and easily led astray, demoralised moreover by the cook, who instead of giving him his innocent bread and milk and bowl of broth according to orders, had excited his carnivorous appetite by feeding him on scraps of meat, the remains of bullocks' hearts and mutton bones; gradually degenerating more from

weakness of character and feebleness to resist temptation than from actual greediness and cruelty; following, even now only part awake, with half-shut eyes and staggering steps, the wretched apes, the true instigators of the crime. Then he took the accused in his arms, displayed his paws, drew attention to their shape and form, appealed to the anatomists, calling upon them to say if, with such paws, an animal could open a locked aviary. Finally he borrowed from Michel himself his famous *Dictionary of Natural History*; he opened it at the article "Cat,"—*domestic cat, brindled cat*; he demonstrated that Mysouff, albeit not of the brindled sort, was not a whit less interesting for having a white coat—the token of his innocence. Then, to wind up, he struck a resounding blow on the book.

"Cat!" he exclaimed vehemently, "cat! . . . yes, I will read you what Buffon, the great Buffon, who always wrote in lace ruffles, what he wrote on the knees of Mother Nature, concerning the cat—

"The cat," M. de Buffon tells us, "is but a faithless domestic pet, one we only keep out of necessity, to keep down other household enemies even more annoying, and which we cannot otherwise get rid of . . .; true," continues the illustrious Naturalist, "true, the cat, and still more the kitten, has pretty ways, it has at the same time an inborn love of mischief, a treacherous disposition, a natural perversity, which age only increases and training only succeeds in partially concealing."

"Well," pursued the orator, after concluding this description of his client, "what need I say more? . . . Did Mysouff, I ask you, did poor Mysouff present himself here with a false certificate of character signed, it may be, by Lacépède or Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, to weigh in the balance against Buffon's indictment?—

No, he scorned to do so.—It was the cook herself who went and fetched him from M. Acoyer's, who hunted him out from behind a heap of firewood where he had taken refuge, who then invented a fictitious tale to enlist her master's sympathies of how she had found the creature mewing piteously in the cellar. Was any attempt made to give him an idea of the wickedness he was guilty of in killing these unfortunate birds, these poor little creatures,—greatly to be pitied, of course, yet which, when all is said and done,—the quails in particular,—were liable to be sacrificed at any moment to satisfy man's hunger, and now find themselves happily delivered from the agonies of terror they must daily have experienced every time they saw the cook come near their cage? . . . . In a word, gentlemen, I appeal to your sense of fairness; we have invented a new word to excuse crime among ourselves, as featherless bipeds, endowed with free will, to wit *monomania*; when, thanks to the word, we have saved the lives of the greatest criminals, shall we not admit that the unfortunate and interesting Mysouff yielded not merely to his natural instincts but also to extraneous suggestions? . . . I have done, gentlemen. I claim for my client the benefit of extenuating circumstances."

Shouts of enthusiasm greeted this flight of eloquence, which was purely extempore. The jury gave their verdict whilst still under the impression of the great advocate's address, and Mysouff was declared guilty of complicity in the assassination of the doves and quails, also of the wrynecks, widow-birds, Indian sparrows, and other rare birds, but with extenuating circumstances. He was merely condemned to five years of incarceration with the apes.

It was this sentence he was serving, shut up in the same cage with the monkeys, on the day when

Maquet, Atala Beauchêne, Matharel and my son Alexandre could be seen watching and listening outside the bars with the varied and sometimes contradictory emotions we experience in visiting a convict prison.

CHAPTER XXIX

DON RUSCONI

BUT, alas! I see I have inadvertently and injudiciously, as my way is, dragged in, without a word of warning, a new character, to trespass on my narrative.

The personage in question, whose name I now introduce for the first time, is Don Rusconi, as he is universally called in my house and among my friends.

Don Rusconi was born at Mantua, like Virgil and Sordello.

Do not imagine, please, that I am going to give you a biography of Rusconi; it would call for several volumes to do so adequately, and the limits of our book forbid such lengthy digressions.

Rusconi's life shows three culminating points. He drank, in the Island of Elba, a cup of coffee with the Emperor; he conspired, in 1822, at Colmar, with Carrel; lastly, he received, at Nantes, from the hands of M. de Ménars, the famous hat, which to this day, I am assured, remains in the family of Her Highness's equerry, as a precious memorial of the Duchesse de Berry.

How came Rusconi, after having taken coffee with Napoleon at Elba, after having conspired with Carrel at Colmar, after having captured the Duchesse de Berry at Nantes, to be showman and exhibitor of my

monkeys at the Villa Médicis? The story is at once an Odyssey and an Iliad.

Rusconi, who had made the campaign of 1812 with the Italian Division of General Fontanelli, had at the time of the disasters of 1814 retired to Milan. There he learnt how his Emperor, after giving away so many thrones, had just been presented with one himself. True, the Holy Alliance had not exactly ruined itself by the gift, for the throne in question was that of Elba!

From that moment Rusconi conceived the idea of consecrating his services to his Emperor.

By the good offices of Vantini, Procureur Impérial in the island, he obtained the post of special Commissary of Police at Porto-Ferrajo.

One day a disturbance occurred between some soldiers of the guard and a body of townsmen. The commissary of the town drew up his report of the circumstances in Italian.

The document was delivered to Cambronne. The latter, who did not know a word of the language and did not expect to remain long enough on the island to make it worth his while to learn it, sent for Rusconi to translate his colleague's report to him.

Rusconi had hardly reached the second line when General Drouot sent for the report. Knowing just as much, or rather as little Italian as Cambronne, he asked for an interpreter to be furnished at the same time as the report. So General Cambronne sent in the report and Rusconi with it, one carrying the other, to General Drouot.

Now General Drouot was just sitting down to breakfast. He invited Rusconi to share the meal; he could translate the report over their dessert.

But it was written above that the said report should never get translated. The two were just beginning

their after-breakfast coffee when in walked the Emperor. He had come to ask for the report.

"But, sire," Drouot told him, "it is in Italian."

"Well, but," said the Emperor, "am I not a Corsican, eh?"

He took the report and proceeded to read it; but as he went on—

"Your coffee smells very good," he said after a bit to Drouot.

"If I might venture to offer your Majesty a cup," said the General.

"Do so by all means, Drouot; but I like it piping hot, I warn you."

Rusconi seized the silver coffee-pot, clapped it on the glowing charcoal, and Napoleon, on finishing his perusal of the report, had the satisfaction of drinking a boiling hot cup of coffee.

Then he invited Drouot and Rusconi to take theirs. They drank it cold, *but* in Napoleon's company; and this was the way the portentous event came about which left so deep an impression on Rusconi's memory.

Rusconi returned to France with the Emperor; but after Waterloo, it was a case of beginning life over again for him.

He withdrew to Colmar, where, thanks to his studies in land-surveying, he made a livelihood by plotting out the territory of France—such of it as the allies had left us.

But France, such as the allies had left it us, was the France he longed to see. The result was that Rusconi having made the acquaintance of Carrel, who was busy conspiring, took up the same trade too.

It was General Dermoncourt, a former aide-de-camp of my father's, who was the ringleader of the

conspiracy. The blow was to be struck on 1st January 1822; the plot was discovered on 28th December 1821!

Rusconi was playing dominoes in his usual café when they came to warn him that a warrant of arrest was out against Carrel, General Dermoncourt, and himself.

He could not well disbelieve the information, seeing it was brought him by the Clerk of the Court, who had himself signed the papers.

Rusconi ran home instantly. He was treasurer of the association; he put in his pocket the five hundred louis which formed the total funds for the moment, and hurried off to Carrel's house.

But Carrel was not at home. So Rusconi, being on the run, dashed out again to warn General Dermoncourt. But neither was the General to be found.

Rusconi had no time to wait for them, having his own precious person to look after. He left a word for each of his confederates, and then away to hide in a wood behind the Colmar road.

It was along this road the conspirators were bound to pass in their flight. First came Carrel; it was six o'clock in the morning or thereabouts. Rusconi hailed him and made himself known. Carrel had been warned and was escaping.

"Are you in want of money?" Rusconi asked him.

"Have you any, by any chance?" asked Carrel in great surprise.

"I have five hundred louis from the general fund," Rusconi told him.

"Give me fifty of them," said Carrel.

Rusconi gave him the fifty louis, and Carrel disappeared at a hand-gallop.

Scarcely had the sound of Carrel's gallop died away in the distance before another horse could be heard coming up at the same rapid pace. It was Dermoncourt taking *his* turn at flight.

Rusconi introduced himself—and his four hundred and fifty louis. Such a sum is always convenient to come across—more particularly when a man is compromised in a plot and is leaving France hurriedly without any definite idea when he may return.

Dermoncourt without more ado mounted treasure and treasurer behind him.

This done, instead of making for the bridge of Alt Brisach, which in all probability was already guarded by this time, they headed for the residence of a relation of General Dermoncourt's.

The day following the arrival of the General and Rusconi at the house in question, nothing was talked about but a shooting-party which it was proposed to hold for the destruction of the water-fowl in the islands in midstream. Fifty sportsmen, chosen from the neighbouring gentry known to hold the most revolutionary opinions, were invited to share the sport. The number was ample to show a good face to all the gendarmerie of the district, supposing the latter should take it into their heads to ask the gunners for their licences. Moreover, to make security doubly secure, instead of loading with ordinary snipe shot, they used, according to individual fancy, some ball and some slugs.

In due course a start was made. There were twenty boats in all—a regular flotilla. One of these got out of her course, carried away presumably by the current, and landed two of the party on the opposite bank of the Rhine, in other words in foreign territory.

The two sportsmen in question were General Dermoncourt and his trusty henchman Rusconi.

The former secured his re-admission to France on a judgment of the Court that no sufficient grounds for a prosecution were to be found. Things went somewhat hard for Rusconi, an Italian and a foreigner; but eventually he was able to return, and set to work again on the survey of the country.

After some years the Revolution of 1830 broke out; Dermoncourt was once more in activity and took Rusconi for his secretary.

In 1832, the General was appointed commander in charge of the Department of the Loire Inférieure, and Rusconi accompanied him to Nantes.

On 7th November of the same year, at nine o'clock one morning, Rusconi found himself in the garret of a house belonging to the Demoiselles du Guigny, chatting calmly with a couple of gendarmes, who were warming their feet at a blaze they had made of old newspapers in the fireplace, when a voice coming they knew not whence, cried—

"Take out the back of the fireplace; we are stifling!"

The gendarmes leapt in their seats, and Rusconi jumped back three steps.

At the same time a loud rapping could be heard on the fireplace back.

"Quick! quick! we are choking," came the same voice again.

Now they knew where the mysterious voice came from, and who it was were choking.

The gendarmes dashed forward and succeeded with difficulty in lifting out the iron back of the fireplace, which was red-hot by this time. Then they proceeded to sweep out the burning paper from the fireplace to afford the prisoners a practicable exit.

The latter then stepped out in the following order:

First and foremost, Her Royal Highness the Duchesse de Berry—taking her proper precedence of course, you say. Not at all; there was no question of rank or precedence about it; Madame was the nearest to the grate-back, and so she came out first, that was all! Rusconi, as a practical squire of dames, offered her his hand with graceful politeness.

Next came Mademoiselle de Kersabiec. In her case it was not so easy a matter; she was so fat she could not get through the opening. Finally, all gave a hand and pulled together, and she was presently landed safely beside the Duchesse.

Next came M. de Ménars, who slipped out unaided; tall and thin as he was, all but his great nose, he could have crept through a mouse-hole, if need be.

Now how had Rusconi, after fulfilling these high destinies, come down to the humble position he adorned about my household? This we may now explain in as few words as possible.

For having conversed with the Duchesse de Berry, hat in hand, while M. le Préfet Maurice Duval had kept his on his head, General Dermoncourt was superseded.

Having to retire into inglorious inactivity, Dermoncourt no longer required a secretary, and this being the case, he parted with Rusconi.

But in dismissing him, he handed him a letter to give to me. In this he begged me to create some sinecure about my person in the employment of which poor old Rusconi might spend the remainder of his years in peace.

I did as I was asked; Rusconi joined my household about 1832, I think, and he is still there as I write.

For three-and-twenty years therefore, except when

on my journeys abroad, I have enjoyed the felicity of seeing Rusconi every day.

"What does he do in the house?"

Well, it would be hard to say—he does everything, and nothing. I have invented a word for it, which perfectly explains what I mean—to *rusconise.*

All the obliging services in fact which a man can perform for his fellow are included in the boundless expanse covered by this comprehensive verb to *rusconise.*

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH *MOUTON* BETRAYS HIS ODIOUS CHARACTER

RUSCONI, you see, lived with me in order to make himself useful. At the present moment he was fulfilling his function by expounding the manners and customs of my monkeys for the benefit of my guests. Needless to say, Rusconi, who was one of the most modest of men, glossed over certain things all he could.

Meantime I was in my little summer-house with the coloured glass windows, dressed in my dimity *pantalon à pieds* and my muslin shirt, working, as I have mentioned before, on the *Bâtard de Mauléon.* As I sat at my work, I was watching, as I have also mentioned before, *Mouton,* who was busy digging up one of Michel's dahlias — not one of my dahlias, for I have never looked upon the dahlia as one of my flowers; indeed, I am not very sure that I regard it as a flower at all, flowers that have no scent hardly seeming to me to come under that category.

Well, as I write, I kept watching *Mouton,* who was digging up one of Michel's dahlias, and saying to myself, "Never mind, my fine fellow; when I have finished off *my fight,* I shall have a word to say to you!"

The fight I was engaged in describing was that

between a dog and a Moor; and for the dog's portrait, as above said, *Mouton* had posed.

Anyway, here is word for word what I was writing—

". . . But scarcely had they taken fifty steps ere a white, motionless figure grew visible in the dusk. The Grand Master, not knowing what it could be, advanced straight upon the spectral-looking being. It was a second sentinel wrapped in a burnoose, who now levelled his lance, saying in Spanish, though with the guttural intonation of the Arabs—

"'You cannot pass!'

"'And who, pray, is this fellow?' Don Frederigo demanded of Fernando.

"'I do not know him,' replied the latter.

"'It is not you then who stationed him here?'

"'No; you see he is a Moor!'

"'Let us go by,' said Don Frederigo in Arabic.

"The Moor only shook his head and continued to hold the broad, keen point of his halberd at the Grand Master's bosom.

"'What does this mean?' cried Don Frederigo. 'Am I a prisoner, then, I the Grand Master, I the Prince? *Holà*, then, my guards, help!'

"For his part Fernando drew a golden whistle from his pocket and blew it. . . ."

It was while I was in the act of writing this dialogue that *Mouton* was busily engaged, with ever-growing activity, in digging up his dahlia, and that I said to myself, "Never mind, my fine fellow; when I have finished off my fight, I shall have a word to say to you!"

Then, with a gesture that promised little good to *Mouton*, I proceeded—

"But before the guards, before even the Spanish sentinel stationed fifty yards behind the two companions,

MOUTON WAS MANGLING MY HAND

appeared, bounding swiftly forward, Don Frederigo's dog. Recognising his master's voice, and gathering that he was calling for help, the animal darted up, his coat bristling with anger, and with one spring, like a tiger, hurled himself at the Moor, seizing him so savagely by the throat through the folds of his burnoose that the soldier fell to the ground with a sudden cry of alarm."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, laying down my pen, "here is my fight and my paragraph completed; "look out for yourself, *Mouton*!"

So saying, I sallied out, without a word to anybody, and crept softly up to *Mouton*, preparing to give him the hardest kick I possibly could with the light slipper I wore in the part of his anatomy exposed to me.

Now the part in question was the animal's rear. Taking the best aim I could, I let fly the promised kick, which proved eminently satisfactory and plainly hurt him shrewdly.

The dog gave a low growl, wheeled round, fixing his bloodshot eyes on me, stepped back two or three paces, then sprang straight at my throat.

Fortunately I realised instantly what he would be at, and found time to put myself in an attitude of defence. At the same moment he leapt upon me, I struck out at him with both hands.

One hand, the right, struck his open jaws, while the other encountered his throat.

Thereupon I felt a pain which I can only compare to that of a tooth being pulled out. Only the agony of a tooth being extracted lasts but a moment, whereas the pain I experienced went on for five minutes.

It was *Mouton* mangling my hand.

Meantime I had him by the throat and was throttling him. I clearly realised one fact, that gripping him as I did, my only chance was to go on choking him, more and more fiercely, till the beast's breath failed him.

So that is what I did. Luckily I have a small, but strong hand; whatever it once seizes, it never lets go of—barring money.

It held firm and squeezed *Mouton's* neck to such purpose that a rattle soon began in the animal's throat. So far so good; I squeezed harder still, and the rattle grew more pronounced. Finally, gathering all my strength for a supreme effort, I had the satisfaction of feeling *Mouton's* teeth begin to unfasten; another moment, and his jaws opened, his eyes rolled, and he fell back inanimate, without my having ever let go his throat. But my right hand was torn to pieces.

I put my knee on the dog's head, and shouted for Alexandre, who came running up, to find me streaming with blood.

Besides my mangled hand, the creature had torn my chest with a blow of his claws, and the blood was flowing freely from the wounds.

At first sight, Alexandre thought the struggle was still going on, and dashing into the salon returned armed with an Arab poniard.

But I stopped his onslaught. "No, no," I told him; "I think it highly important to see him eat and drink, to make sure he is not mad. Let them put him on his muzzle and take him to the stables."

Michel was summoned, and he slipped on *Mouton's* muzzle; then, and not till then, did I let go his throat.

The animal had lost consciousness. They took him up by the four paws and carried him off to the stables.

As for me, I made straight for the salon. I felt the time was come to sit down in a chair and be ill myself.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GREATEST AUTOGRAPH-HUNTER IN PARIS

WHEN I came to myself, I was surrounded by my guests.

The first thing I looked at was my injured hand. The palm was torn open to the bone, the metacarpal bone was bitten through in two places, and the first joint of the little finger was all but torn away.

You will perhaps suppose, dear readers, that on regaining consciousness, it was of myself I thought. Not so, it was of *Mouton*.

"Has *Mouton* come to yet?" I asked.

They ran to the stable to find out. Yes, *Mouton* had come to all right; but he was like me, he could not stand on his legs.

"Good," I said. "And now go and fetch the Regimental surgeon."

"Why the Regimental surgeon?" Alexandre demanded.

"I have my reasons."

It was no time to go against my wishes; so they went for the Regimental surgeon.

In ten minutes he was standing beside my chair.

"We shall first have to cauterise this," he began.

"Not so," I answered.

"What do you mean by *not so*?"

"I mean I have no fear of rabies; I am only afraid of tetanus supervening."

"You are certain the dog is not mad?"

"Yes, quite certain; the animal attacked me because I gave him provocation. I am to blame."

My confession made, it only remained to adopt a mode of treatment.

"My mind is made up on that point too," I informed the doctor. "You will treat me with iced-water, according to the method of Baudens and Ambroise Paré."

"But then, why did you send for me," the doctor asked, "if you know as well as I do what is to be done?"

"Why, dear doctor, I have sent for you to stitch the flesh together, and put the bones of my hand straight; they are dislocated a bit, I imagine."

The doctor took my hand, straightened out the forefinger, middle and ring fingers, which were bent over, secured the last joint of my little finger with a bandage, plugged the palm with lint, tied in the thumb with a ligature, and this duly completed, asked where I proposed to establish my hydraulic apparatus.

I had a charming *fountain* of Rouen ware with silver-gilt taps; I fitted a straw to the cock, filled the reservoir with ice and fastened it against the wall.

Then I had a camp bed made up underneath and a support fixed for my wounded hand; after which I lay down on the improvised bed and turned the tap.

For three days and nights I lay there, only getting up to go and see if *Mouton* had begun to take his food and water.

The first day I paid no very great attention to the matter. On the second day, I began to get anxious.

By the third day, I was more than anxious, I was getting terrified.

Yet they had made the fellow a tasty soup out of all the meat scraps available in the kitchen, and provided him with a bucketful of clean water.

At last, about the middle of the third day, when I had left my tap for a moment to pay one of my visits to *Mouton*—visits which grew more and more frequent as the time drew on, I had the satisfaction of seeing *Mouton* with his nose crammed into the soup-bowl.

Then, like a well-brought-up dog, that knows it is wholesome to drink after eating, I saw our friend, after polishing off his soup, make for his bucket of water.

I did not leave him time so much as to dip the tip of his tongue in it before I called, "Michel! Michel!" and that worthy appeared.

"Did Monsieur call me?"

"Yes, my dear man, you can take *Mouton* back to Challamel's, now I have seen what I wanted to see."

Michel put out his head at the stable door I had left open on withdrawing, and,—"What was it Monsieur wanted to see?" he called after me.

"I wanted to see if *Mouton* was going to eat and drink; he has eaten and drunk, and I am satisfied."

"So!" said Michel, "was Monsieur afraid of going mad?"

"Why, Michel, what——?"

"Oh, but, if Monsieur was afraid, I have a sovereign remedy for rabies. First you take some fowls' dung and you mix it with milk which you leave to go sour; then you add——"

"Beg pardon, Michel, but is your remedy internal or external?"

"I beg yours, sir; I don't understand."

"Is it to be rubbed in, I mean, or to be swallowed?"

"Oh! swallowed, sir; but I have not told Monsieur half the ingredients yet."

"I know quite enough, thank you, Michel; now I am not afraid any more of going mad, I won't trouble your nostrum."

"Oh, but, sir, to make quite sure!"

"Michel, you go and take *Mouton* back."

"Come on, then, scamp!" cried Michel, as he led the dog off, which never once dropped his nonchalant air. The animal had only once done so in all our acquaintance, and that was when he flew at my throat.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Michel returned.

"You have taken plenty of time about it, Michel!" I observed.

"I should think so," replied the man; "M. Challamel would not have him back."

"And why would he not take him back?"

"It seems his master got rid of him because he bit."

"Very well, Michel, next time you see Challamel, you will thank twice instead of once, mind that!"

I don't know whether Michel thanked Challamel once or twice; but I do know this,—Challamel has never forgiven me for sending *Mouton* back to him.

For the first three days I had felt no great degree of boredom; the dread of going mad had kept ennui victoriously at bay; but the instant this haunting preoccupation was banished, my head was full of my interrupted romance, the *Bâtard de Mauléon.*

Alas! it was no easy thing to write with a hand entirely deprived of the power of movement and swathed in bandages; but I did not despair. I called to my aid all the mechanical notions I possessed, and

hit on the following device. I inserted the penholder into a sort of pincers which I contrived between the fore, middle and ring fingers; and thanks to a motion of the forearm which I substituted for that of the fingers and wrist, I took up my story again just where I had dropped it in order to administer to *Mouton* the unfortunate kick that had precipitated the whole disaster. But, as may be supposed, this novel method of execution made a great difference in my handwriting.

Such was the state of affairs when Gudin, who was a near neighbour, came over to see me. I noticed he entered the room with a certain caution. The fact is, the report was already going about that I had been bitten by a mad dog, and had had a first fit of madness by this time.

I reassured Gudin, and showed him my contrivance, which he praised warmly.

Then, by way of conversation—

"Do you know," he said, "though I am the greatest collector of autographs in Paris, I have not a single specimen of your handwriting."

"Really!" I exclaimed.

"No, not a single one."

"And you thought it was time to see about getting one, eh?"

"Oh, my dear sir!——"

"Well, Gudin," I told him, "I am going to give you one—and a mighty curious one too, that nobody can boast of having the match to."

"How do you mean?"

"I am going to give you the first volume of the *Bâtard de Mauléon*, written in two different handwritings—that of the good hand and that of the ill. You can tell the reason of the alteration, and it

will be at one and the same time an autograph and a good story."

"Oh, but," protested Gudin, "I am really ashamed to take it!"

"No need, dear boy, no need! you can give me a drawing, and we shall be quits."

"Done, it's a bargain!"

"Very well; you must send to ask news of me every day, and the day the volume is finished I will hand it over to your servant-man."

"Oh no, but I will come myself!"

Gudin was as good as his word, and came to inquire every day. The third day he carried away the volume with him.

I am waiting for a dog to bite Gudin's hand so that I can go and tell him, "Dear Gudin, do you know I have not a single drawing of yours?"

CHAPTER XXXII

MY FIRST HARE

THE opening day of the season came at last. The day had been impatiently expected by Vatrin, Michel, and myself. This 1st September was to see a definitive judgment pronounced on Pritchard.

Ever since I was a boy, I had fired my first shot of the season in the same locality—at a worthy farmer's named M. Mocquet, at Brassoire. It was there that, in company with my brother-in-law and M. Deviolaine, I had killed my first hare.

It is a fine thing killing one's first hare; I don't think I felt so much elated at my first literary triumph!

Every year I went to Brassoire for the opening day. I used to revisit the memorable spot, and if I had any one with me, I would tell the said some one in solemn tones—

"This is the place where I killed my first hare."

Shall I tell you how a fellow kills his first hare? It will make me feel forty years younger. All the more so as, following my good friend Dr. Demarquay's advice, I have at this moment one leg extended on a foot-rest with a swelling of the synovial tissue in the knee—which means I may very possibly have killed my *last* hare last year.

I was thirteen, and possessed of a pretty single-

barrelled gun with a velvet pad on the butt, showing it had been a lady's gun before being a child's.

My brother-in-law and M. Deviolaine had got my poor mother's permission for me to join their shooting party at Brassoire.

I was the rawest of recruits; my exploits hitherto had included seven larks and a partridge. All through dinner,—and everybody knows how long a farmhouse dinner lasts,—I had been the butt of the company's wit. But as we rose from table, M. Mocquet whispered in my ear—

"Never you mind, I'll put you in the good places, and it won't be my fault if, by to-morrow evening, it's not you having the laugh of them."

How long the night seemed! I heard and counted every hour as it struck. At six I was up, dressed and downstairs. I hung about the yard waiting; it was still dark night, and everybody else was fast asleep.

At seven the windows began to open; by eight the sportsmen were assembled, and thirty or so peasants from the neighbourhood were standing in line at the main gate of the farm. These were the beaters.

The sport began directly this main gate was passed. M. Mocquet placed me, at a hundred yards from the farm, in a sandy ravine. The youngsters in their play had excavated a great pit in the sand. M. Mocquet showed me this, and told me to bury myself in it, declaring, if only I kept still, the hares would come tumbling about my feet.

It was not exactly luxurious; the morning was bitterly cold and the air biting. Soon the sport began. At the first cries of the beaters, two or three hares sprang out, and after a moment's consultation as to

the route to be followed, they started off, spaced at intervals like the three Curiatii, whose story I had been translating only the day before in the *De viris illustribus*, and made straight for my ravine.

I could not believe my eyes at first. Were they really hares? they looked to me as big as donkeys.

But when there could be no more doubt about their identity, when I saw them come towards me as straight as if they had made an appointment to meet at my hole, a mist passed over my sight, and I thought I was going to faint. I believe I actually shut my eyes.

But I soon opened them again, to see my hares still following the same bee-line. The nearer they came, the more furiously did my heart beat; the thermometer registered some degrees below zero, yet the moisture was pouring down my face. Finally, the one who led the advance seemed definitely to make up his mind to charge, and came straight at me. From the moment he first started, I had my aim on him; I could have let him come within twenty paces, or ten, or five for the matter of that, and swept him out of existence with my shot, as if with a thunderbolt. But I could not hold myself in; at thirty yards I fired straight at his face.

Instantly the hare turned head over heels in a way that showed plainly he was hit, and then began a series of the most fantastic capers.

I leapt from my lair like a tiger, shouting—

"Ha, ha! have I got you, have I got you, eh? Here, dogs! Beaters, beaters, here! . . . Ah! you scamp, you villain, wait a bit, wait a bit!"

But instead of waiting a bit to receive the punishment I was keeping for him for being so set on escaping, the hare, no doubt hearing my voice, only began a set of even more frantic twists and turns.

As for his two companions, one, scared by all this commotion and his friend's mad antics, turned tail and broke back through the line of beaters. The other chose a bolder course, and ran close past me—so close that, having nothing in my gun, I threw the gun itself at him.

But this was only a side issue after all, which did not for a moment distract me from the main attack.

I dashed in pursuit of my hare, which continued to indulge in the maddest dance ever seen, not going ten steps in a straight line, springing first to one side, then to the other, leaping forwards, leaping backwards, upsetting all my calculations, escaping me at the very instant I thought I held him, scudding ten yards ahead of me as nimbly as if he had not a scratch, then suddenly wheeling right round and darting between my legs. You might have thought he was doing it for a wager. I was furious, and my shouts changed to howls of rage. I picked up stones and hurled them at the creature; when I thought I had him within reach, I threw myself flat on my face, hoping to trap him between my body and the ground. Through the sweat that half blinded me, I could make out in the distance, as if through a fog, the rest of the party, —some cracking with laughter, some swearing with annoyance. The former were vastly amused at the frantic efforts I was making, the latter vexed at the rumpus I was kicking up, which was bound to frighten the game for a quarter of a mile round.

At last, after unheard-of efforts, which neither pen nor pencil can ever reproduce, I caught my victim by one paw, then by two, finally by the middle of the body. Now rôles were reversed; it was I who kept a grim silence, while the poor beast uttered despairing cries. I gripped him against my chest, as Hercules

I CAUGHT MY VICTIM BY ONE PAW

did Antæus, and got back to my hole, not forgetting, as I went by, to pick up my gun, which lay on the ground where I had thrown it.

Back in my lair, I could examine my hare properly, and I saw the explanation of the whole thing.

I had destroyed both the wretched creature's eyes, without doing him any other injury.

I gave the animal the knock on the back of the neck so well known to sportsmen, by which they put hares and rabbits out of their pain. Then I reloaded my gun, with a beating heart and a trembling hand. . . .

Perhaps I ought to end my narrative here, seeing my first hare is duly killed; but I think, for my part, this would be leaving the story incomplete.

Well, I reloaded my gun, as I say, with a beating heart and a trembling hand. The charge struck me as somewhat heavy; but I could trust the barrel, and this excess of four or five lines gave me all the better chance of killing at long range.

Hardly was I back in position before I saw another hare coming straight for me.

I had had enough of firing head on; and indeed this one looked like passing me full sideways at twenty-five yards.

He did exactly as I hoped; and taking aim with more steadiness than might have been expected, and more than I had supposed myself capable of, I fired, in the full persuasion I had secured my brace of hares.

The priming fired, but the gun refused to go off!

I pricked out the touch-hole, reprimed, and waited further developments. M. Mocquet knew his ground, and had not exaggerated a bit in promising me fine sport.

A third hare came along in the track of his predecessors. Like the last, he gave me a full sideways

shot, at twenty yards. As before, I aimed carefully; and as before only the priming went off.

I could have cried with vexation—the more so as a fourth hare came trotting up.

The same thing exactly was repeated. He did everything he could to oblige me, and my gun was as pig-headed as ever. The creature passed within fifteen yards of me, and for the third time my weapon missed fire.

Evidently the hares had passed the word, and the first one that got past safe and sound had signalled to the others there was no danger.

This time the tears actually came. A good shot, posted where I was, would have killed his four hares.

The shooting was over, and M. Mocquet came to see how I had fared.

"It has missed fire three times over, M. Mocquet," I cried in a lamentable voice; "three times over at three different hares!"—and I showed him my gun.

"Priming not caught, or gun missed fire?" asked M. Mocquet.

"Missed fire! What the devil can be wrong in the chamber?"

M. Mocquet shook his head, took out of his game-bag a wad-extractor and screwed it on to the end of his ramrod. Then he extracted first the top wad, then the shot, then the second wad, then the powder, then, after the powder, half an inch of soil, which had lodged in the muzzle when I pitched my gun at the hare, and which I had forced right down the barrel with the first wad I pushed home on top of the charge of powder.

I might have shot at a hundred hares; my gun would have missed fire every time!

Vanity of human wishes! but for this half inch of

soil I should have had two or three hares in my bag, and been the king of the day's shoot.

Well, it was to this same spot, so full of youthful memories, that I used to return as a man, still a passionate lover of sport, still a broken sleeper on the night before the opening day of the shooting season.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ALFRED AND MÉDOR

ON this occasion I was visiting the old spot as leader of the company, which included my son, Maquet, and my nephew.

Both my son and Maquet are known to the reader, but not so my nephew. The latter, at this date, was a big, or rather a tall youth of nearly six feet, who, more favoured than the camel of the Scriptures, might very well have passed through the eye of a needle.

Everybody has his fellow in the animal kingdom, and my nephew belonged to the genus of long-legged waders.

His baptismal name was Alfred, and he was invariably accompanied on shooting days by a dog called Médor.

Oh, Médor! Médor was worth his weight in gold. And how exactly Médor suited Alfred, and Alfred Médor. Since he has lost Médor, Alfred is the old Alfred no more.

He (Alfred) was what they call a pretty shot, killing three times out of four. But Médor! . . . never a mistake, never a fault, never a false point at a lark!

At five in the morning, or as soon after as might be, the sport began on opening days, and Alfred would range up with the other guns.

But this was a mere concession to public discipline.

At the first coppice, the first warren, the first rising ground, Alfred would discreetly vanish. He would slip away, with Médor nosing twenty yards ahead of him.

At noon, during the halt for lunch, you would see Alfred reappear, always marching along with the same regular strides, like a pair of compasses measuring out the ground.

By this time Médor's enthusiasm had calmed down, and he kept soberly side by side with his master.

We would beckon to Alfred to come and join the rest; but he would never condescend. He would point to a hunch of bread and a little flask of brandy he held in his hand, and shake his head to signify that he looked upon our lunch as a piece of Sybaritism unworthy of a true sportsman. Then he would once more disappear.

At five in the evening all returned. Numbers were counted, and everybody was found to be present except Alfred.

At seven, on leaving table, the company strolled out to the door of the farm to enjoy the fresh air and listen to the partridges calling in the stubbles.

Then the man with the best eyes gave a sudden cry. On the horizon-line, relieved against the red of the sunset, Alfred could be made out still keeping his regulation yard-long stride. Only Médor, who in the morning had been twenty paces ahead of his master, and at noon had been side by side with him, now at eventide was plodding wearily twenty yards behind his heels.

As night closed in, sportsman and dog always turned up as regularly as clockwork, invariably bringing in their three dozen partridges, their half-dozen quails, their three or four rabbits, two or three hares, and very often a brace of woodcock into the bargain.

All this Alfred carried in his game-bag, without a sign either of conceit or affected humility. There was enough to fill three game-bags, yet his seemed half empty. The fact is he was a most admirable packer.

He would pull out each bird or beast separately, look it over, smooth down feathers or fur, as the case might be, and deposit it on the table, beginning with the small and ending with the big.

The operation lasted a good quarter of an hour, and then, on counting, the bag was frequently found to include fifty or sixty head of game.

On the conclusion of the enumeration, Alfred's remark was invariably the same—

"Well, now it's time to go and titivate a bit."

And, before touching food, Alfred would march up to his room to put on striped socks, patent-leather shoes, a waistcoat and trousers of drill, tie round his neck a very broad cravat of the lightest blue, and pass —as a matter of hygiene presumably—through his scanty locks a comb that had more bristles than his skull had hairs.

Meantime we would be examining Alfred's bag, to find it included a good quarter that bore no mark of shot whatever.

This portion was Médor's contribution. Never was there such a dog for catching, or letting his master catch, a rabbit in its form or a quail sitting.

Next day the company, men and dogs, would start out afresh with somewhat diminished ardour — but Alfred and Médor with unabated zeal.

This time it was a trial of prowess between Médor, in the decline of life, and Pritchard, in the heyday of youth, who stood up to one another like two rival athletes.

If it had been solely a matter of speed, Pritchard

would have been an easy victor. Hardly out of the farm gates, Pritchard leapt on to the top of a dike, studied the lie of the country with his mustard-coloured optics, lashing the air the while with his tufted tail. Then in a moment dashed off in the direction of a patch of clover.

Shouts and whistles were equally unavailing. Deaf as a dead dog, Pritchard blocked his ears and let us yell.

A third of the way across the field, he stopped dead.

"Look!" said Alfred, who had watched him away with a look of profound contempt, "you would really think he was pointing!"

"And why shouldn't he point?" I asked.

"H'm! h'm!"

Alexandre was rolling a cigarette at the moment; he made as if to put it away so as to get up in time.

"Oh," I told him, "you need not hurry; light your cigarette by all means." So my son finishing his rolling, licked the paper and duly lit up.

Pritchard stood as firm as a rock.

"Well, well, let's go and see what's what, anyway," suggested Alfred.

So we set off for the clover. A space of four hundred yards or so divided us from Pritchard.

We soon came close up behind the dog, but he never budged.

"Go on in front of him," I told Alexandre, and Alexandre did as he was bid; but still not a movement.

"Oh ho!" laughed Alexandre, "your dog is squinting!"

"What do you mean—squinting?"

"Yes, he is staring towards Morienval to see if Pierrefonds is on fire."

"Well, *you* look down at your own feet, and see what will happen."

I had hardly spoken when a leveret broke covert.

Alexandre let fly at the animal, which rolled over dead.

But still Pritchard never stirred. Only he had stopped squinting. The eye that was looking Morienval way to see Pierrefonds was now directed in the same axis as the other.

"Idiot!" cried Alfred, giving him a kick under the tail; "can't you see it's dead and done for?"

Pritchard looked round with an air that said "You're another!" as plain as words—and went on pointing, as steady as ever.

"There, look at the creature!" sneered Alfred.

"Why, don't you see?" said I, "he has marked down two leverets at once. One has bolted under my son's nose, and the other is going to follow suit under Maquet's."

I had not finished speaking when the second leveret, as if he had only been waiting my instructions, broke covert too.

Maquet missed him with his first barrel, and knocked him over with his second.

"Come, Médor, come along!" said Alfred; and he started off for Morienval.

"Good!" I said to Alexandre, "here's Alfred taking *his* line; we shall not see him again till this evening."

"Let's console ourselves for his loss with the hope he will *never* come back," observed Alexandre.

So saying, he picked up his hare and clapped it in his bag, while Maquet did the same with his.

"All the same, four of us, with two dogs,—things

were going finely, while with only three and one dog . . ."

"I think Pritchard, by himself, is as good as two," observed Maquet sententiously.

"Where *is* the dog, by the bye?" asked Alexandre.

We peered about in every direction; not a sign of Pritchard!

At that moment our attention was attracted by a shot fired by Alfred, who had just disappeared behind the crest of a bit of shrubbery. The explosion was followed by shouts of, "Hi! Médor, go fetch, go fetch!"

"Well," remarked Alexandre, "there's Alfred beginning his day's shooting."

While Alexandre and Maquet were reloading their guns, not only did Alfred's vociferations continue, but they increased in volume and intensity.

"Look, look!" I urged Alexandre; "do look there!"

Alexandre turned his eyes in the direction in which I pointed.

"Ah! good," he said, "so Pritchard has caught a partridge, I see."

"Caught it, no; stolen it rather."

"Stolen it! Who from?"

"Why, from Alfred, to be sure! It is the bird he is telling Médor to go fetch."

At that moment a second shot rang out, still in Alfred's direction.

"Look, look what Pritchard is after!" I shouted to Alexandre.

"Come, come," he laughed, "you should have told me we were going to the play and not to a shooting party; then I could have brought my opera-glasses instead of a gun."

The fact is Pritchard had just dropped into a furrow the partridge he was carrying, and had started off again at full speed in the direction of the shot.

Ten seconds more, and he reappeared with a second partridge.

Alfred was still shouting at the top of his voice—

"Go fetch, Médor, go fetch!"

"Will you kindly explain what's happening?" asked Maquet.

"Oh, it is quite simple," I told him. "There is a coppice on the hillside yonder; just outside its limits a partridge got up in front of Alfred, and Alfred killed it; only the bird fell inside, among the trees. Alfred thought it was all right, and shouted, as he reloaded his gun, 'Fetch, Médor, go fetch!' Alfred knew his dog, and had no fear of the result. *But* he did not know Pritchard, who is a thief, a pirate, a bandit! He was in the coppice, and picked up Alfred's bird before Médor had so much as jumped the boundary ditch, and set off to bring it in to me without troubling his head whether it was I had shot it or no. Alfred, bothered at not seeing either Médor or his partridge again, made his way into the coppice to help his dog. A second partridge got up, which he killed, as he had the first. From where he was Pritchard could see the direction in which the bird had fallen. He dropped his first prize and darted after the second. . . . And, look, there he comes with the second, as he was doing with the first; or rather, here he comes with them both!"

"Well, upon my word!"

"Not a doubt about it; he has come back by way of the furrow where he deposited his first partridge. Presently, when he got there, thinking his jaws were capacious enough to carry the pair of them, he per-

formed the feat you see, or rather which you do not see. . . . Look, Alexandre, do! Look, Maquet!"

"What's he after?"

"He is marking down a quail, with a brace of partridges in his jaws."

"How does he manage to scent the quail?"

"He does not scent it, he sees it. Catch hold of my gun."

"Why, what are you going to shoot it with?"

"I am not going to shoot it; I am going to catch it in my hat."

I walked up to Pritchard, and, following the direction of his eyes, I saw the quail.

A second later the bird was under my hat.

"Well, well," grumbled Alexandre, "possibly it's more diverting than using our guns, but it's not sport."

At that moment we saw Médor appear, following in Pritchard's tracks, and Alfred following in Médor's.

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked Alfred.

"The matter! What's the matter? . . . I like your fun! I fire at two birds, I kill them both, and I can't find one! A fine beginning truly!"

"Ah, well," I told him, "I am luckier than you; I have not fired a shot yet, and I have bagged a brace of partridges and a quail."

So saying, I showed him in one hand the two dead partridges, and in the other the quail, still alive and kicking.

The whole thing was explained by reference to Pritchard's exploits, and Alfred cursed the dog soundly.

But the dog was not there to hear his maledictions. He had vanished again, and was hunting on his own account. As it was getting too fatiguing to keep with him, we made up our minds to shoot on our

own hook, and only use Pritchard as opportunity might offer. We spread out in line and fell to without a dog.

Alexandre, who has first-rate sight, had just caught sight of Pritchard a quarter of a league away, on the opposite side of the valley.

It was not our shooting there—a detail that did not trouble Pritchard in the slightest, but was highly important to us.

A partridge got up in front of me, and I fired—my first shot that day. Wounded, but not killed, the bird flew straight ahead, and seemed likely to drop somewhere near a lad gleaning in a field.

I had no Pritchard with me to tell him to go fetch; so I resolved to follow up my bird and retrieve it myself.

On the way I put up a leveret and shot it. This rather distracted my attention from my partridge, the result being that by the time I had picked up the leveret and put it in my game-bag I had rather lost my bearings.

Fortunately the gleaner gave me a point to make for. He was now sitting down eating.

I walked up to him.

"Ho! my good fellow," I accosted him, "have you seen a partridge?"

"A partridge, eh?"

"Yes, a partridge."

"I've seen many a one, sir."

"Yes, but a single one?"

"I've seen single ones too."

"A wounded one."

"Wounded?"

"Yes."

"Oh! I know naught of that."

"Come, don't play the confounded idiot, my lad! I ask you a plain question; when I fired just now, did not you see a partridge drop?"

"Oh, it was you who fired?"

"Yes, it was."

"Ah, well, I saw naught drop."

I gave a wry look at the young fellow and fell to hunting about for my bird, Alexandre helping me.

Suddenly—"Look!" he exclaimed; "here's Pritchard come back."

"Why, where is he?"

"There, by your gleaner, looking very much as if he wanted to prig the fellow's breakfast."

"Dry bread, eh? You don't know Pritchard."

"Well, but just watch him a moment."

I did so, and saw the whole thing in a flash.

"Oh ho!" I laughed, "this is the finest game of all!"

"He's pointing at your gleaner!" cried Alexandre.

"Not he; he is pointing at my partridge, which is not dead and *is* in that fellow's pocket."

"Hosannah!" cried Alexandre; "if that's so, I call the dog a miracle."

"Take half a franc, step up to that fine young labourer, who looks to me to be a good bit embarrassed by the dog's attentions, and tell him this: 'My father's partridge and half a franc, *or* my father's partridge and a kick behind . . ."

The fellow had got up by this time and was trying to make off.

But Pritchard, who saw the game running away on two human legs, kept persistently on the track of the rascally lad, his nose at the height of the fellow's pocket.

"Call off your dog, sir, call off your dog," whimpered

the young scamp; "he's going to bite me"—and he started running.

"Bring him in, Pritchard, bring him in!" I shouted.

The dog gave a spring and seized the lad by the pocket of his jacket.

"There, now!" I said to Alexandre, "it's all plain sailing for you."

Alexandre hurried up, dived his hand into the thief's pocket and drew out the missing partridge.

As this was the only attraction drawing Pritchard to this new acquaintance, hardly was the bird out of the lad's pocket before Pritchard let go his jacket.

No need to proceed further with the tale of Pritchard's deeds of prowess.

After a long day, during which the extraordinary animal had indulged in the most frantic and altogether unexpected eccentricities, I returned to the farm with twenty-five brace or so of game to my credit.

Alfred the Great with the redoubtable Médor had not done better.

Only, the net result of my observations on Pritchard and his little ways was this: that the sportsman who had the happiness to own him had better go shooting utterly and absolutely alone. A Trappist monk was the only individual capable of really appreciating his merits.

THE DOG GAVE A SPRING, AND SEIZED THE LAD BY THE POCKET OF HIS JACKET

CHAPTER XXXIV

HOW ALFRED WAS OBLIGED TO RETURN TO COMPIÈGNE IN HIGHLAND COSTUME

THE following day, thanks to Pritchard, who started us a covey of partridges in a clover field belonging to one of M. Mocquet's neighbours, M. Dumont of Morienval, we had an argument with the aforesaid M. Dumont.

We thought we gathered that, seduced by feelings of neighbourliness, and I believe even of relationship, M. Mocquet was not backing us properly.

We called a council therefore, and resolved, instead of going back to his house, to give up the shooting and return to Compiègne.

We had hired in the Sous-préfecture of the Oise a little open cart, which had been entrusted, along with the horse, to our care and guidance.

Our guidance was indeed called for whenever the microscopic quadruped in question was under way. Though claiming the name of horse, by the bye, he was barely as big as a good-sized donkey.

But it would seem that little horses, like little men, are naturally quarrelsome. Ours, from the first moment we had commanded his services, had never ceased to wrangle with us.

Accordingly I was entrusted with the task of reasoning with him, and as my arguments had been a stiff

bit and an active whip, he had ended, not indeed in owning himself in the wrong, but by acting as if I had proved myself right.

Thanks to my good management, I had brought myself and three companions safe and sound to the farm in the first instance. Now that we had determined definitely to leave for Compiègne without going back to M. Mocquet's at all, we despatched an under-keeper to Brassoire, with orders to put *Dévorant* to the cart and drive out to join us somewhere on the line of the Compiègne road. Our Bucephalus was called *Dévorant* because of his capabilities in the way of devouring space.

Alfred alone had raised some objections to these arrangements. The fact is he would be obliged to return to Compiègne without the possibility of "titivating a bit,"—a circumstance that must prejudice him in the eyes of the fair ladies of the Sous-préfecture of the Oise. But his regrets and expostulations were ignored in deference to our offended dignity.

Accordingly, about noon we saw *Dévorant* appear on the horizon, together with cart and keeper. The nag, which had eaten at the farm the allowance of oats of an ordinary-sized horse, was neighing and tossing his head and moving his ears like the arms of an aerial telegraph. All this promised us as animated an argument on the return journey as we had enjoyed before.

At the moment *Dévorant* appeared the shooting was going famously; we resolved, therefore, to let the cart follow on after us till the time came for getting into it.

Besides, we thought, it was a good way to calm the animal's over-high spirits to make him, as a preliminary to his journey to Compiègne, do his

three or four leagues over ploughed fields and stubble.

Then there was yet another advantage; as each shot told, the game was carried to the cart at once. On the morrow of the opening day of the season not only are legs a bit tired, but shoulders are apt to be lazy.

Unfortunately our expectations with regard to *Dévorant* were imperfectly realised. True, the ploughed land and the stubbles exerted a calming effect, but the firing exasperated his nerves the more. Every time a gun went off, man and horse had a desperate struggle.

At two o'clock we called the roster. This time Alfred was present; he knew that if he did not show up at this supreme moment he would have four long leagues to cover on foot; and though perfectly content to do his four, or, at a pinch, eight leagues, across country, he had no sort of desire to tramp the same distance along a high-road.

The cart was waiting for us at the edge of the forest. We took our places in the following order: Maquet and Alfred on the back seat, Alexandre and myself on the front.

Médor, as a dog of a certain age and one having every right to consideration, slipped unobtrusively and noiselessly between our legs. Obviously his only wish was to escape notice. He was seen all the same, but the only result was that his modesty received a warm eulogium.

Pritchard, on the contrary, crushed under Alfred's jeers and gibes, sneered at as a performing dog, told he ought to turn out next season with a Zany's coat of many colours,—Pritchard never seemed to conceive the idea of sharing the comforts of our conveyance, but set off sturdily along the road, his nose pointing for Compiègne, his tail waving in the wind, without

apparently giving so much as a thought to the two hundred leagues he must, at the lowest computation, have galloped since the day before.

I offered to take the reins; but Alexandre pointed out that, being nearer Hippolytus' age than I was, it was his office to drive. I was only half convinced; however, with my usual easiness of temper, I let him have his way.

Besides, being the youngest of us all, he was the most interested in not killing himself; this sounds specious, but it is a poor argument nevertheless. But I am so often satisfied with fallacious arguments, that I yielded to this, which was only half fallacious.

We set off in due course. The calculation we had relied on as to *Dévorant* in connection with the ploughed lands and stubbles proved utterly and entirely wrong. Obstacles, instead of daunting that intrepid little animal, only irritated him. So no sooner did he feel a good hard road under his hoofs than he started off like the wind.

"Good! away you go! . . ." cried Alexandre, slackening the reins.

The road was uphill for some distance. After a hundred yards or so, *Dévorant* saw he was acting foolishly and dropped into a more sober gait.

We thought it was fatigue; it was really hypocrisy. *Dévorant* was looking for his opportunity to score a startling revenge on us — and he was not long in finding it.

We jogged on, talking sporting talk, till we came to a very steep descent. On our left we had the forest falling away in a sort of amphitheatre; on our right a ravine fifty feet or so deep.

The highway authorities, always full of fond care for travellers' safety, had been kind and considerate enough

to plant stone posts every ten yards to serve as a parapet along the edge of the road bordering the ravine. But in the intervals between these posts there was nothing whatever to prevent carriages, horses, or pedestrians from pitching over.

On the opposite side of the road broken flints were piled in long heaps every ten yards.

Dévorant cast a look to the left, a look to the right, a look ahead. Ahead he had the descending hill; to left the heaps of flints, to right the ravine.

The spot struck him as well adapted for his purpose, and the circumstances as propitious.

Without the smallest warning he broke from a trot into a gallop. Alexandre tugged hard at the reins, but *Dévorant's* pace only grew more and more furious.

There was no mistaking his intentions, especially for any one occupying, as I did, the front seat.

The following brief dialogue was exchanged under our breaths between my son and myself:—

"What now?"

"Eh?"

"*Dévorant* is bolting, I think."

"To be sure he is."

"Hold him in."

"I can't."

"Can't! Why not?"

"He's taken the bit between his teeth."

"Well, well!"

We were now travelling five-and-twenty leagues an hour.

"What's the matter?" asked Alfred and Maquet in the same breath.

"Nothing, nothing!" I told them; "only *Dévorant* is a bit fresh."

As I spoke, with a rapid, and at the same time

vigorous motion, I wound the off rein round my wrist, and hauled violently to the left.

The bit slipped from between the animal's teeth, and the latter swerved violently to the left and dashed into one of the heaps of flints above mentioned.

Seeing himself turned aside, and feeling the slipping stones yield under his feet, *Dévorant* fell into a perfect fury.

Losing all hope of breaking our necks by upsetting the cart, he was determined to have some satisfaction instead. So he set to work to kick out and break our limbs; and he kicked so frantically that one leg got over the shaft.

In this unaccustomed predicament *Dévorant*, it seems to me, completely lost his head. Suicide seemed a pleasant thing, if only he could kill us at the same time.

Accordingly, with a violence and an unexpectedness there was no gainsaying, he made a half-turn to the right, and sweeping diagonally across the roadway, dashed towards the ravine.

This time the dialogue was briefer still between Alexandre and myself.

"We are done for!"

"Yes, father!"

I do not know what the others did; for my own part I shut my eyes and waited developments.

Suddenly I felt a terrific jar, and was pitched out of the cart on to the high-road. The shock was appalling.

Alexandre had fallen full length on top of me, so that he was guaranteed from injury from head to heel.

In a second he was on his feet; and in another second I was on mine.

"Are you hurt?" I asked him.

"Not a scrap. And you?"

"Not a scrap either," I assured him.

"Well, then, the dynasty of Dumas being safe and sound, let us see what has become of the others,"—and we cast an inquiring look about us.

Alfred had disappeared, Maquet was lying almost unconscious.

Alexandre ran to him and raised his head.

"What is wrong, my dear old fellow?"

"I am in for a broken arm anyway—if not a broken back," groaned Maquet.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Alexandre, "that's bad hearing what you say."

Maquet turned deadly pale, and fainted away again. Alexandre dragged him on to the slope of the ditch on the left side of the road.

Meantime I was examining the upper part of my thigh. I had been a bit premature when I said I was not a scrap hurt. I had fallen on top of my gun-barrel, which I had flattened out by the force of my fall and the weight of my body, doubled by those of Alexandre atop of me.

The result was, not a fracture of the bone,—thank goodness the stuff my thigh-bone was made of had proved too much for the metal,—but a most terrible bruise. My thigh had turned a brilliant violet that strongly resembled the tints decorating the door-posts of a pork-butcher's.

At that moment I caught sight of Alfred, who was coming up to join the rest of the party; slim as an arrow, light as a rush, and having encountered no obstacle, he had been tossed thirty yards away. Médor was following him at ten paces behind.

"Look," I said to Alexandre, "we were just looking for Alfred; there he is coming back from Compiègne."

I hailed him. "What news?" I asked.

"I have torn my trousers from top to bottom."

"And yourself?"

"All right, all right!" declared Alfred.

"Too bony to come to much harm, eh?" laughed Alexandre. "Ah! there's Maquet coming to again."

It was so; he was opening his eyes and looking about him. A flask still held a little brandy, and we made him swallow a few drops.

He got on to his feet, staggering at first; then presently, little by little, he regained his centre of gravity.

We now had time to turn our attention to *Dévorant* and the cart, and think how the accident had happened.

By a providential miracle, just as we were on the point of being pitched over the edge, the wheel had struck a post, mounted it, and emptied us out into the roadway.

The horse hung suspended over the precipice, the weight of the vehicle alone preventing his falling. The animal was literally swimming in empty space.

We stepped up and looked over the edge. It was enough to make you giddy! Picture a ravine fifty or sixty feet deep, nicely carpeted with jagged rocks, brambles, and nettles.

If the wheel had not encountered the post, horse, cart, and ourselves must all have been dashed to pieces!

We made several attempts to draw *Dévorant* back into the road; but our efforts were quite unavailing.

"My word!" said Alexandre at last, "the beast chose the place himself; let him stay there. Let's attend to ourselves first. What do *you* want, Maquet?"

"To rest a while."

THE HORSE HUNG SUSPENDED OVER THE PRECIPICE

"Well, there's the ditch-side to welcome you with open arms.—And you, father?"

"What's left of the brandy."

"What! the brandy? Why, to think of *your* drinking brandy!"

"All right, my boy; it's for my thigh."

"Well and good, here's the stuff you ask for. And you, Alfred?"

"I think," said Alfred, seizing the opportunity, "that it's about time to titivate a bit."

Then, drawing a small comb from his pocket, he began arranging his hair, as systematically as if he had been in his room at M. Mocquet's farm.

"There!" he said, when he had finished, "I think now, I can, without being wasteful, offer my trousers as a gift to the nymphs of the wood."

And pulling off his tattered breeches, after displaying the garment for a moment to the company to see if any one put in a claim, and no tongue having spoken, he tossed the trousers into the ravine.

No one had said a word, in the first place because the trousers did not seem in the least worth claiming, and secondly because all eyes were fixed on Alfred's legs, which till that moment we none of us had ever had occasion to see except encased in more or less voluminous garments.

"Alfred," said Alexandre solemnly, "do you know what M. de Talleyrand said to the Mayor of Ferrette, who had legs of your sort?"

"No; what did he say?"

"He said: 'Mister Mayor, you are the bravest man in France.'—'Why so, Monseigneur?'—'Because you are the only living soul bold enough to walk on such a pair of legs!' Well, I think you are even braver than the Mayor of Ferrette."

"Oh, what a pretty wit!"

"I take no credit for the joke," said Alexandre; "it's not mine."

"Ah! thunder!" suddenly cried Alfred, with a despairing gesture.

"Why, what now?"

"Fool that I am!"

"Don't say things like that, Alfred; they might believe you, you know."

"Just think, the key of my dressing-bag is in my trousers pocket."

"In the trousers that are in your carpet-bag?"

"No, no; in the pair I have just offered up to the nymphs of the wood."

"Never mind, never mind! Why, man, you're showing yourself to them with every advantage; they will take you for Narcissus, lucky beggar!"

"Yes, but the brambles and thorns!"

"After all, who risks nothing wins nothing."

All this while the peasant men and women who were passing along the road—it was market-day at Crépy—gazed at us with curious looks, carefully refraining, of course, from affording us any assistance.

It is very true things may have worn a suspicious aspect to them. They understood very well what Maquet was doing, sitting pale and haggard at the edge of the forest; they understood very well what Alexandre was doing, loosening his cravat and rubbing his temples with a handkerchief soaked in the cool water of a neighbouring rivulet; they understood very well what I was doing, bathing my bruised leg with brandy. But they failed to comprehend what this Scotsman-looking fellow, with bare legs, what he was doing, pacing up and down above the ravine, into which he darted savage looks,

accompanied by growls and howls and threatening gestures.

Suddenly he gave vent to a cry of joy—

"I am saved! I am saved!"—and pointing to the ravine: "Go search, Médor," he cried, "go search!"

Médor hurried down into the depths of the ravine. Five minutes afterwards he reappeared with his master's trousers.

But, alas! a fresh calamity. During the journey the key of the carpet-bag had slipped out of the pocket, which was found to be perfectly empty.

You can imagine how much prospect there was of finding it in such a dense mass of undergrowth.

Thus Alfred was necessarily compelled to return in Highland garb into the Sous-préfecture of the Department of the Oise.

Happily, it was already dark by the time we reached the first houses of the little town.

We despatched the carriage proprietor to look for the cart and *Dévorant*. He found them both precisely where we had left them.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW I BROUGHT BACK FROM CONSTANTINE A VULTURE WHICH COST *ME* FORTY THOUSAND FRANCS—AND THE GOVERNMENT TEN THOUSAND

WHILE we were performing, on the high-road from Crépy to Compiègne, the upset I have had the honour of telling you about in the preceding chapter, two men, escorted by a couple of Spahis and several servants, native and European, were following, on their return from a long expedition they had just concluded, the road from Blidah to Algiers.

"It is a strange thing," one of the two travellers was observing to the other, "a very strange thing that the magnificent country we have lately been traversing should be so little known. Can you think of any way of popularising it?"

The individual addressed seemed to ponder the question a moment or two; then suddenly—

"Do you know what *I* should do, Monsieur le Ministre, if I had the honour to be in your place? I should so arrange it that Dumas should make the same journey we have just terminated and then write two or three volumes about Algeria. Dumas is all the fashion at the moment; people will read his book, even though it *is* a book of travel, and out of the three million readers he will have, perhaps he will

inoculate fifty or sixty thousand with a taste for Algeria."

"A good idea," said the Minister; "I will think it over."

The two who paid me the compliment of calling my name to mind on the road from Blidah to Algiers were, one M. de Salvandy, Minister of Public Instruction, the other our famous traveller and my own very good friend, Xavier Marmier.

Well, M. de Salvandy, on reflection, thought so well of the suggestion that one fine morning in September I received an invitation to dine with him at the Ministry. Thither accordingly I betook myself, not a little surprised at the honour done me. My only acquaintance with him was in consequence of his having been instructed by the Duc d'Orléans to bestow on us, Victor Hugo and myself, on Hugo the Officer's Cross of the Legion of Honour and on me the Chevalier's of the same noble Order.

At that period, to prevent our nomination giving rise to too excessive a scandal, he had deemed it judicious to complete the group by the addition of a worthy nonentity by name Grille de Bruzelin. As there was no conceivable reason for giving the decoration to this latter individual, M. de Salvandy had deemed he would by himself constitute an adequate counterpoise for Hugo and myself.

M. de Salvandy had likewise written, in his salad days, a sort of a romance entitled *Alonzo, or Spain in the*, I don't quite remember which, *Century*; still, this hardly constituted him a literary *confrère* to a sufficient degree to suggest his going out of his way to cultivate my acquaintance.

Then what *could* M. de Salvandy want with me? It was certainly not to raise me to the rank of Officer

of the Legion of Honour; ideas of that sort never occur spontaneously to Ministers—least of all in connection with men who deserve the distinction!

Accordingly I set out for M. de Salvandy's dinner, not exactly anxious, I don't mean that, but with many thoughts running through my head.

The Minister received me with his most affable mien and blandest smile, and after our coffee, drawing me aside in the garden of the Ministry—

"My dear poet," he began, "you must do us all a favour."

"What, a poet do a Minister a favour! Nothing I should like better—if only because of the rarity of the thing. What is it?"

"Have you made your arrangements for the winter?"

"Arrangements, I! Now, do I ever make arrangements? I live like the birds, on a bough. If there's no wind, I stay where I am; if it blows, I spread my wings and away where the wind takes me."

"And would you have any objection to the wind taking you to Algeria?"

"None whatever; on the contrary, I have always had the strongest wish to visit Africa. I was ready to start for that continent on July 26, 1830, at five in the evening, when at five o'clock on the preceding morning the *Moniteur* published the famous Royal '*ordonnances*.' The result was that, when evening came, instead of taking the mail-coach, I took my gun, and three days later, instead of arriving at Marseilles, I was fighting my way into the Louvre."

"Well, if your wishes still point the same way, I can offer to help you to pay travelling expenses."

"Oh! as for that," I answered, "times are changed since then! Sixteen years ago I was a young man, a sort of roving student of Salamanca, tramping the

high-roads afoot, knapsack on back and iron-shod staff in hand. But nowadays I drag a whole string of followers after me. I can do nothing unaccompanied in these days; the journey you propose is a tremendous business."

"And that is why," the Minister said impressively, "I have set aside ten thousand francs to defray the cost."

"Now, look here, are you very much set on my going to Algeria?"

"Why, of course; else I should not have asked you."

"It will really gratify you?"

"It will, very much indeed."

"Well, then, I will add another forty thousand francs, out of my own pocket, to the ten thousand you offer me—and I will go."

M. de Salvandy looked at me in utter amazement.

"Egad, sir! that's how it is," I told him; "you don't suppose I am going to travel like a vagabond herb-doctor. I propose to invite three or four friends to go with me; as you are sending me to represent France, I wish to do my country honour."

At first M. de Salvandy had imagined I was joking; but he now came to see I was speaking with perfect seriousness.

"Then, that is not all," I went on. "If I am to go to Algeria, I wish to go with all the travelling facilities the Government can put at my disposal."

"Well, you *are* a hard man to please!" objected the Minister.

"As a man will naturally be when he can go perfectly well without you; so, going to please you, he lays down certain conditions, and no wonder. Don't you like my tone? Well, then, I will make the journey on my own account and as I please."

"But I gather you *will* make it?"

"'Pon my word, yes! You have given me the notion, and now I am dead set on going."

"But that is not the way I want you to go; I want you to go with a special commission from Government. Come now, what was it you were going to ask for when I interrupted you? Do you want us to make you Officer of the Legion of Honour?"

"No, thank you; I have no ambition in that line. I was made Chevalier by the poor dear Duc d'Orléans, whom I was devoted to with all my heart. If he were there to make me Officer, I would very likely agree; but he is not, to my deep regret, and I prefer to remain what he made me rather than become something else."

"Well, what *is* it you want, then?"

"I want a Government vessel to be put at my service and that of my travelling companions, to coast along the shores of Algeria at my own sweet will, and not as your officials may see fit to direct."

"Why, man, you are asking us to do what is only done for princes!"

"Exactly so. If you do no more for me than you are ready to do for Tom, Dick, and Harry, why trouble me at all? I have only to drop a line to the Head Offices of the *Messageries*, and I can secure on board their liners not merely a passage for Algeria, but for any part of the Mediterranean."

"Ah, well, so be it, then. You shall have your man-of-war. But if you imagine it will be any saving to you, you are very much mistaken!"

"Saving! any saving? Do you suppose *I* was thinking of saving? For a Minister of Public Instruction you are, let me tell you, very ill instructed."

"Now, when do you wish to start?"

"Whenever you please. I have two or three novels to finish, but that's a matter of a fortnight; I have some railway stocks to sell, but that's a question of an hour or two."

"In a fortnight, then, you will be ready?"

"Certainly."

"And your *Théâtre-Historique*?"

"They will finish building it while I am abroad."

I made my adieus to the Minister, and we parted the best of friends.

Next day I had the honour to dine at Vincennes with the Duc de Montpensier. I told him about the strange notion that had occurred to the Minister of Public Instruction—sending me on a journey to Africa by way of popularising our colony of Algeria.

"Well," the Duke declared, "it is a very capital idea—especially if you take Spain on your way."

"And why, pray, should I take Spain on my way?"

"Why, to attend my wedding; you know I am to be married on the 11th or 12th October."

"I thank you cordially, Monseigneur; you pay me the greatest compliment. But what will the King say to it? Your Highness is aware he does not altogether share the goodwill you are good enough to bear me."

"The King will know nothing about it till afterwards; then, finding you eligible to go to Algeria, why, he will think you good enough to go to Madrid. In one word, set your mind at rest; it is *I* am getting married, and I invite you to my wedding."

"I accept, Monseigneur, gratefully."

We were then between the 20th and 25th September, and the Duke's marriage was fixed for the

11th or 12th October. There was not a moment, therefore, to be lost, if I meant to be at Madrid two or three days before the happy event.

I began by realising the money needful for the journey. I held 50,000 or so francs' worth of stock in the Lyons railway. The moment was favourable for selling, and the shares could be disposed of at a comparatively small loss—say 20 per cent. I instructed my broker, who duly disposed of my 50,000 francs of scrip for 40,000 francs in ready money.

As for the 10,000 francs contributed by Government, as this sum was for Algerian expenses, I would only touch the money in Algeria, and sent my letter of credit to Marshal Bugeaud to hold for me. These two precautions taken, the main thing was done; all that was left was to see about my travelling companions.

I wrote to my son and to Louis Boulanger—

"I am starting to-morrow evening for Spain and Algeria; will you come with me?

"If you say yes, you have only to think of packing your trunk. Only, pick out the smallest,—Yours ever,

"ALEX. DUMAS"

I wrote practically the same letter to Maquet, only making the wording a trifle more formal.

All three wrote back to say they accepted.

It only remained to find the model servant-man who was needed to take charge of the luggage and arrange, so far as possible, that the four travellers should not die of hunger.

I say *find* advisedly, because not one of the domestics I had at that period was the man required.

Alexis was too young; the coachman too limited in his functions; as for Michel, I never for one moment regarded him, during all the dozen years he spent under my roof, as being really in my service. Michel was simply and solely in his own service. Only, as he dearly loved animals, he made me believe it was I who loved them, and, for his own increased satisfaction, multiplied the numbers of bipeds, quadrupeds, and quadrumanes. Thus it was I came to possess, by Michel's count, twelve or fifteen fowls of unknown antecedents, five or six cocks of rare breeds, two dogs, one of which, as we saw just now, tried to devour me, three monkeys and a tom-cat that made the marauding expedition on my humming-birds, Indian sparrows, and quails which the reader will probably recall.

Michel, therefore, was to stay behind with his animals, because, if I took Michel with me, I should have to take his menagerie as well.

At this crisis chance came to my assistance. Mind, I am not so conceited as to say *Providence*; I leave that to crowned heads.

Chevet, to whom I owed a bill of 113 francs, having heard say I was starting for a voyage round the world, thought he would like to see the amount of his little account paid up before I left Saint-Germain.

He appeared, therefore, one morning in person, his bill in his hand. This settled, I asked if by any chance he knew of a good servant who would be willing to accompany me to Spain and Algeria.

"Why, sir," he exclaimed, "how aptly that falls out; I have a perfect pearl to offer you—a negro."

"A black pearl, it seems."

"Yes, sir, but a true pearl nevertheless."

"The deuce, Chevet! I have a negro already, a

ten years' old one, who is, off his own bat, as lazy as two negroes of twenty—if they grow to twenty."

"That is just his age, sir."

"He will be as lazy as two negroes of forty then."

"Sir, he is not a true negro."

"What, he is dyed!"

"No, no, sir; he is an Arab."

"Ah, the deuce! but that is a find for any one going to Algeria—unless indeed he talks Arabic the same way Alexis talked Creole."

"I don't know, sir, how Alexis talked Creole; but I do know an officer of Spahis came to the house the other day, and they jabbered away together, Paul and he."

"He is called Paul?"

"Yes, he is called Paul for us, that's his French name; but for his compatriots, he has another name, an Arab name that means *Benzoin-Water*."

"You will be answerable for him?"

"As I would for myself, sir."

"Very well, then, send me your Benzoin-Water."

"Ah, sir, you will soon see what a treasure you have got! A *valet de chambre* as elegant as a man could wish, of a fine olive tint, speaking four languages, not counting his own, a good walker and a good rider. He has only one fault; he invariably loses whatever you trust to his care. But then, you understand, one never trusts him with anything——"

"Good, Chevet, good; thank you, thank you!"

By the four o'clock train I duly saw Benzoin-Water arrive. Chevet had not deceived me; the man showed no sign whatever of the low brow, flat nose, and thick lips of the natives of the Congo or Mozambique.

He was an Abyssinian Arab, with all the elegant shape and limbs of his race. As Chevet had told me,

his complexion was of the very tint to have delighted Delacroix. Being anxious to test his boasted linguistic talents, I spoke a few words to him in Italian, English, and Spanish. He answered me quite correctly, and as he also spoke French very fluently, I came to the same conclusion as Chevet, that he knew four languages besides his own.

Now how this drop of fragrance named Benzoin-Water had come into existence on the slopes of the Samen Mountains, between the shores of Lake Ambra and the sources of the Blue Nile, is a matter on which Benzoin-Water could never afford me any information, and so I cannot tell you. All that one could make out amid the obscurity of his earliest years was that an English gentleman, a globe-trotter, returning from India by way of the Gulf of Aden, had chosen to ascend the River to Naso and pass by Emfras and Gondar, had halted at the latter town, had there seen the little Benzoin-Water, a lad of five or six, and, taking a fancy to his looks, had bought him of his father in exchange for a bottle of rum.

The boy followed his new master, crying bitterly for three or four days after his lost parents. Then, under the influence, so powerful with all and especially with children, of change of scene and surroundings, he grew pretty nearly reconciled in the course of a week, by which time the caravan reached the sources of the river Rahad. The English traveller descended that river to the point where it discharges its waters into the Blue Nile; then he followed down the latter stream to where it joins the White Nile; he halted a fortnight at Khartoum, then resumed his journey, and two months later arrived at Grand Cairo.

For six years Benzoin-Water remained with his English master. During that time he went all over

Italy, and learnt a little Italian; Spain, and learnt a little Spanish; England, and learnt a little English. Finally he settled down in France, and acquired a really sound knowledge of French.

The child from Lake Ambra took very kindly to this nomad life, which recalled that of his ancestors the Shepherd Kings—for Benzoin-Water had so proud a carriage, so aristocratic an air, that I have always maintained, and do so still, that he must have been descended from those conquerors of Egypt. If it had depended on him, he would never, despite the ancient saw of good King Dagobert, have left his English master; but, alas! his English master left him. He was a great traveller, this Englishman; he had seen everything—Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and even Oceania. He had seen all this world, and determined to visit the next. Every morning at seven o'clock he was in the habit of ringing for Benzoin-Water. One morning he did not ring. At eight o'clock Benzoin-Water went into his room, to find his master hanging from the ceiling, the bell-rope round his neck—which sufficiently explained why he had not rung.

The Englishman was generous; he had even taken the precaution, before hanging himself, to leave a rouleau of guineas to Benzoin-Water. But the poor lad was not of a saving disposition; like a true child of the tropics, he loved everything that glittered in the sun; provided it glittered, what matter to him whether it were copper or gold, green glass or emerald, tinsel or ruby, paste or diamond. So he spent his guineas in buying whatever glittered, purchasing now and again by way of variety sundry drinks of rum, for the fellow was very fond of rum—a fact, by the bye, which Chevet had omitted to tell me, no doubt because I was sure to find it out very soon for myself.

When Benzoin-Water had, I won't say eaten up—he was but a small eater, the poor lad—but scattered to the winds his last guinea, he realised the time was come to look out for another place.

As he was good-looking, pleasant, and obliging in all his ways, with a clear eye, an open smile, and flashing white teeth, he was not long in finding a new master. This was a French colonel, who took him with him to Algeria, where Paul found himself as it were *en famille*. It was his native language the Algerians spoke, or, to be strictly accurate, he spoke the mother-tongue of the Algerians with far more purity and elegance than they did themselves, for his Arabic is borrowed from the primitive source of that beautiful speech. He stayed five years in Algeria, in the course of which time, the grace of the Lord having touched him, he had himself baptized under the name of Pierre, doubtless to safeguard himself the right, like his patron saint, of thrice denying God.

Unfortunately he had forgotten, when he chose the name, that it was his master's too. The end was that the Colonel, not wishing to have a servant called the same as himself, unbaptized Benzoin-Water and changed his name from Peter to Paul, deeming it would not fail to please him to exchange the patronage of the Apostle who holds the keys for that of the one who holds the sword.

At the end of these five years Paul's Colonel was retired. He came back to France to appeal against the order, but to no purpose. So the Colonel being reduced to half-pay, had to inform Paul that to his great regret he was forced to part with him.

There was one disagreeable difference between the Colonel and the Englishman, to wit that the former being still alive and needing his money to end his

days with, gave Paul just what was due to him for wages and no more. The amount came to thirty-three francs and a half, which promptly vanished between Paul's brown fingers.

However, in the Colonel's service, that officer being very fond of good living, Paul had made one very useful acquaintance, Chevet's namely. We have seen how the latter had recommended him to my notice, telling me he was a capital servant, with one great fault, however, that he always lost whatever was entrusted to his keeping.

I stated a little above somewhere that Chevet had omitted to warn me that Paul had another fault, a decided predilection for rum ; I added that this was probably because Chevet felt sure I should soon find out this fact for myself.

Well, Chevet had formed too exalted an opinion of my powers of observation. True, I saw Paul from time to time getting to his feet as I went by to salute me, and rolling big eyes which had turned from white to yellow ; I noticed that he held his little finger desperately to the seam of his trousers, a pleasing military posture he had learnt in the Colonel's establishment ; I heard how he mixed up confusedly English, French, Spanish, and Italian. But, buried in my work, I paid small heed to these superficial changes, and continued to be very well satisfied with his behaviour. Only, in accordance with Chevet's advice, I never trusted anything to Paul's charge—except the key of the cellar, which, contrary to his general custom, he never lost.

Thus I remained in blissful ignorance of this fatal failing of Paul's until one day an unexpected incident revealed it to me. After starting for a shooting party, intending to remain away a week, I came back next day unexpectedly, and as I usually did on returning home, called for Paul.

But there was no answer. Then I called Michel; but Michel was in the garden. So I called Michel's wife, Augustine; but she was out marketing. I made up my mind to go upstairs without more ado to Paul's bedroom, fearing he might have hanged himself like his former master the Englishman.

A single glance reassured me on this head. For the moment Paul had entirely forsaken the vertical posture for the horizontal; fully dressed in complete livery, the fellow was lying on his bed, as stiff and still as if he were embalmed; I did not think he was this, but I own I thought he was pretty near gone to another world. I called him by name, but could get no answer. I shook him, but he never stirred; I lifted him by the shoulders, just as Pierrot lifts Harlequin; not a joint gave. I set him up on his legs, and seeing a point of support was absolutely necessary to enable him to stay there, I planted him against the wall.

During this latter operation Paul had at last vouchsafed some tokens of life. He had tried to speak, opened his eyes very wide, showing only the whites. At last his lips managed to articulate some almost unintelligible sounds, and he asked peevishly—

"Why are they disturbing me?"

At that moment I heard a noise at the bedroom door. It came from Michel, who had heard me calling from the bottom of the garden, and had come at last.

"Halloa!" I asked him, "is Paul mad?"

"No, sir," he answered me, "but Paul is drunk."

"What! Paul drunk?"

"Alas! yes, sir. The instant Monsieur's back is turned, Paul has a bottle neck between his teeth."

"Why, Michel, you mean to say you knew this, and you never told me!"

"I am here to be Monsieur's gardener, not to play the informer."

"True, Michel; you are in the right. Well, and now, what are we to do with the fellow? I cannot spend all the day holding him up against the wall."

"Oh, if Monsieur wants to sober Paul, it's easily done."

It will be remembered that Michel possessed a recipe to meet all embarrassing circumstances whatsoever.

"What must we do to sober Paul, eh, Michel?"

"Heavens and earth, man! try to keep upright against the wall, do!" (this parenthetically to Paul).

"Monsieur has only to take a glass of water, drop into it eight or ten drops of alkali, and force Paul to drink it off. He'll give a great sneeze and be sober in an instant."

"Have you any alkali, Michel?"

"No; but I have a supply of ammonia."

"That comes to exactly the same thing. Put some ammonia into a glass—not too much—and bring it me here."

Five minutes later Michel came back with the required mixture. We unclenched Paul's teeth with a paper-knife; then we slipped in the edge of the glass and tilted it gently. The contents followed two main directions—down Paul's throat and down his neck-tie. Though the latter certainly got the lion's share, still the patient imbibed some, and as Michel had foretold, presently gave so terrific a sneeze that I fled, leaving him unsupported. He staggered for a moment, sneezed a second time, opened great staring eyes and looked about him, uttering only a single word the while, though that seemed to express his thoughts quite adequately—"Faugh!"

"Well, now, Paul," I said to him, "now that you

are sober again, lie down, my fine fellow, and go to sleep, and directly you wake, bring me your account; I do not like drunkards."

But, whether it was that Paul was of an exceptional nervous susceptibility, or that his brain was overstimulated by the ammonia, instead of dropping off to sleep, as I advised him, or presenting me with his claim for wages, as he was entitled to, he fell to throwing his head back, writhing his arms and making the faces of a demoniac. Paul had a violent nervous seizure, and amidst, or rather in the intervals between, his wild contortions, he kept crying out—

"No, I don't want to go away; I am happy here, and I want to stay! I only left my first master because he hanged himself; I only left my second because he was put on half-pay. M. Dumas has neither been retired nor hanged himself—and I want to stay on with M. Dumas."

This affection toward myself personally touched me. I made Paul give me a promise, not that he would leave off drinking, he was too honest to give any such, but that he would indulge as little as possible. I also compelled him to give me back the key of the cellar—an act of restitution for which I felt the more grateful as it evidently cost him a severe pang, and so everything resumed its everyday course.

What made me something more indulgent to the offender than I should otherwise have been was the fact that a few days before that fixed for my departure to Spain, my friend De Saulcy had come to ask me to dinner, and had talked Arabic with Paul, informing me after the conversation that Paul spoke that language as well as Boabdil or Malek-Adel.

Accordingly, on the appointed day we duly set out, Alexandre, Maquet, Boulanger, and myself, attended

by a black shadow that was none other than our friend Paul.

I have no intention in this place of relating my famous Spanish journey, which I was supposed to have undertaken in the capacity of historiographer of the marriage of the Duc de Montpensier, nor yet my still more famous African expedition, which, thanks to M. Léon de Malleville, and M. Lacrosse, raised such a startling echo in the Chamber of Deputies.

No, my intention is simply and solely to come to the story of a new inmate which the aforesaid African journey was to add to my menagerie of pets.

I was at Constantine, where, gun in hand, I was watching a number of vultures wheeling round and round above a charnel-house. I had already sent two or three shots amongst them, which had produced no sort of effect, when I heard a voice behind me saying—

"Ah, sir, if you want one, a live one, I can find you one for sale, I can—and very cheap."

I turned round and recognised a little ragamuffin of pure French breed, from the most populous European quarter of the town, a *Beni-Mouffetard*, as he called himself, who had on two or three occasions served me as guide, and who had had good reason to approve of my generosity each time.

"A fine bird?"

"Magnificent."

"How old?"

"Still got its milk teeth."

"But exactly?"

"Oh! eighteen months at the outside. You know they live to a hundred and fifty, vultures do?"

"I don't *insist* on his living to that advanced age, my lad. Well, how much will they sell your vulture for, eh?"

"Oh, ten *balls*, and you shall have him."

Needless to inform my readers that in street slang ten *balls* means ten francs.

"Very well, Beni-Mouffetard," I told the lad; "fix up the thing for a dozen, and there will be a couple of francs for yourself."

"Only," added the young scamp, as if seized with a touch of remorse, "I ought to warn you of one thing."

"Yes?"

"He's as dangerous as the pest, that damned vulture is. There's not a living soul but the man who caught him as a nestling and feeds him dare come near the creature."

"Very good!" I said; "if he is so dangerous as all that we will put a muzzle on him."

"Yes; but when you do it you'll have to look out for your fingers. Day before yesterday he bit off a Kabyle's thumb, and only yesterday a dog's tail."

"We will take care, never fear!"

By next day I was owner of a superb vulture, a bird without a fault—except, as the Beni-Mouffetard had warned me, having the look of wanting to eat up every one and everything that came near.

He was christened at once with the name of his fellow-countryman *Jugurtha*. Jugurtha, for greater security, was handed over to me in a large cage made out of bits of board, and, poor feathered prisoner, he had a chain two or three feet long attached to one leg, which to prevent chafing was wrapped round with a rag.

The hour of departure having come, we set out on our way back by the same vehicle that had brought us, to wit the ordinary diligence that runs regularly between Philippeville and Constantine.

This mode of conveyance possessed one advantage at any rate; the coach travelled so slowly, and made so many detours, that lovers of sport could indulge their taste all along the road.

Jugurtha would fain have indulged *his* sporting instincts too. From the top of the *impériale*, where he travelled, he could see whole flocks of birds that he looked upon as his predestined victims, and which, as tyrant of the air, he evidently felt aggrieved at not being allowed to devour, flesh, bones, and feathers. He paid off a portion of his resentment on the finger of an outside passenger who had tried to get on friendly terms with him.

Philippeville was reached without further accident. There more difficulties arose; there was a league still to cover to arrive at the port of embarkation, Stora, and the diligence did not go on to that place.

True, the road from Philippeville to Stora affords a charming walk, running beside the shores of the bay as it does, with the sea on one side and fine hills and pretty woods on the other, and my companions had resolved to cover the intervening miles on foot.

But how was Jugurtha to get over the distance?

It was out of the question to put his cage on a porter's back; he would have devoured the man alive through the interstices between the bars. To hang him from a pole and have him carried as in a litter on the shoulders of two bearers would have cost a matter of fifty francs, and after buying a vulture for twelve francs, commission included, one does not feel disposed to pay fifty for transport. I thought of another method; this was to lengthen his chain to eight or ten feet by means of a rope, and drive him on foot in front of me with the help of a long switch—the same way turkey tenders drive their charges to market.

The first thing was to force our friend Jugurtha to leave his cage. To tear away the planks by hand was not to be thought of; Jugurtha would have torn the worker's hands all to pieces long before the planks gave way.

I began by fastening the rope to the end of the chain; then I stationed two men, armed with picks, one on each side of the cage. Each man stuck the point of his pick between the bars; then each pulled violently in opposite directions.

Two opposing and equal forces, in mechanics, neutralise each other when they are applied to the same object; but if this object has solutions of continuity, it is bound to give way and go in the direction of the one that pulls the stronger.

The final result was that a plank yielded, then two, then three, and presently the whole of one side of the cage was open and exposed. As Jugurtha had not been docked of a single feather of his wings, his first movement was to dart out, spread his wings, and fly away. But he only flew as far as the length of his rope; cockchafer or vulture, if you have a string to your leg, you are bound to break the string or remain a prisoner.

So Jugurtha was forced to come down again. But Jugurtha was a very intelligent creature, and saw plainly enough where the obstacle came from, and that I was the enemy to be attacked. Accordingly he dashed at me, in the vain hope of either putting me to flight or eating me up if I refused to fly.

But Jugurtha had to do with a creature every bit as intelligent as himself. Foreseeing the attack, I had given Paul orders to cut me a nice, springy, dog-wood stick, as thick as my forefinger and eight or ten feet long.

I let fly with my switch full tilt at Jugurtha, who seemed surprised, but continued to advance; I gave a second taste of the same, which stopped him; finally, I administered a third dose, which started him off in the reverse direction, that is on the road to Stora. Once on the way, I had only to manage my switch cleverly, and Jugurtha made his four or five kilometres just as fast as we did, to the huge admiration of my travelling companions and of everybody we met *en route*.

Arrived at Stora, Jugurtha made no difficulty about getting into the boat, and from the boat on board the *Véloce*, took up a position on the bowsprit, and calmly waited, tied to the base of the foremast, till a new cage could be built for him. When this was ready, he walked into it of his own accord, allowed the bars to be nailed into position without an attempt to bite the men's fingers, and received with evident gratitude the scraps of meat which the ship's cook gave him with kindly regularity. Three days after his coming aboard, he would offer me his head to be scratched like any tame parrot, though on his arriving eventually at Saint-Germain, Michel tried quite fruitlessly to teach him to say the regulation: "Pretty Poll, scratch pretty Polly's head!"

So you have the story of how I imported from Algeria a vulture that cost me forty thousand francs and only cost the French Government a trifle of ten thousand.

I LET FLY WITH MY SWITCH FULL TILT AT JUGURTHA

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOW PRITCHARD BEGAN TO RESEMBLE THE MARÉCHAL DE SAXE, TO WHOM MARS HAD LEFT NOTHING BUT A LOVING HEART

ON my return to France, I found my house which I was building on the Marly road pretty nearly finished. In a few weeks' time I had the papering and woodwork of the whole of one floor completed, so that I was able to satisfy the wishes of my landlord at the Villa Médicis, who, finding I had spent between seven and eight thousand francs on his property, had conceived the very natural desire of going back to it himself and so profiting by all the improvements I had made.

I left Saint-Germain, therefore, to go and live at the Porte-Marly, in the much-discussed house which was subsequently christened Monte Cristo by Madame Mélingue, and which later on made such a noise in the world.

Michel had long before this made all his arrangements for the accommodation of my animals. I am bound to say he paid far less attention to my comfort, or, for the matter of that, to his own.

I do not know what is the condition of Monte Cristo nowadays; but I do know that, in the time of my occupancy, there was neither wall nor ditch nor hedge nor enclosure of any sort about the place.

Consequently men as well as animals could enter at their own sweet will, walk about where they pleased, pluck the flowers and gather the fruits, without any fear of being charged with trespass or burglary. As for the animals,—and it is to the dogs I would specially refer,—Pritchard, who was naturally of a very hospitable disposition, did the honours of the house with an agreeable and disinterested freedom from formality quite Highland in its character.

This hospitality was practised by Pritchard in the most simple and antique fashion. He would squat well in the middle of the Marly road, go up to every dog that passed with that low growling that is half a threat and half a friendly greeting, and is the canine manner of saying "How d'ye do?"—smell the new-comer in the orthodox way, and submit to the same ceremony himself.

Then, as soon as a proper understanding had been reached by dint of these little familiarities, conversation would begin on something like the following lines—

"Have you a good master?" the strange dog would ask.

"Oh, not bad," Pritchard would say.

"And are you well fed at your place?"

"Why, we have pie twice a day, bones for breakfast and dinner, and all through the day anything we can prig from the kitchen."

The strange dog would lick his chops at the mere thought.

"Plague on't!" he would say, "you've nothing to complain of!"

"I'm not complaining," Pritchard would declare.

Then, seeing the strange dog looking pensive—

"Would you like to dine with me?" Pritchard would invite him.

Dogs never have the silly habit men are prone to of waiting to be pressed.

The guest always accepted eagerly, and at dinner-time I was greatly surprised to see an animal I knew nothing about walk in under Pritchard's escort, sit down on my right, if Pritchard took the left, and paw my knee coaxingly in a fashion that told me plainly what flattering accounts he had received of my kindly and Christian disposition.

No doubt invited by his host to spend the evening with him, as he had spent the day, the dog stayed on, and presently, finding it was too late for him to get home, found a comfortable place for himself somewhere about the premises, and there slept off his heavy meal.

Next morning, when the time came to go, the dog would stroll once or twice in the direction of the outer gate, then, thinking better of it, would remark to Pritchard—

"Would it be making very bold if I stayed on in the house?"

To which Pritchard would reply—

"With a little care and ingenuity you can very easily make them think you are the dog from next-door. Then in a day or two nobody will think any more about you, and you will be one of the household, every bit the same as those lazy apes that do nothing whatever all day long, and that greedy vulture that does nothing but gobble guts, and that squalling macaw that shouts all the time without ever knowing what it's talking about."

So the dog would stay where it was, hiding itself a bit the first day, wagging its tail at me the second, gambolling at my heels the third, and there would be an inmate the more of my establishment.

This sort of thing went on. Michel asked me one day—

"Does Monsieur know how many dogs we have on the premises?"

"No, Michel, I don't."

"Sir, there are thirteen of them."

"It is an unlucky number, Michel, and we must take care they don't all sit down to table together; there would infallibly be one that would die first."

"But that's not the point, sir," insisted Michel.

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Why, these fine chaps would eat up an ox a day, horns and all."

"Do you really think they would eat the horns, Michel? I cannot believe it myself."

"Oh! if Monsieur takes it like that, I've no more to say."

"You are wrong, Michel; speak out, and I will take it exactly as you prefer."

"Well, sir, if you give me a free hand, I'll just take a good whip and I'll turn the whole crew out of doors this very morning."

"Come, Michel, let us be reasonable. All these dogs, after all, are paying a compliment to the house by staying here. Give them a grand dinner to-day and tell them it's a farewell feast; then at dessert you will put them all out at the door."

"How does Monsieur think I am going to put them out at the door? There *is* no door."

"Michel," I replied gravely, "we must put up with certain conditions of locality and social position and inherited disposition, such as we have unfortunately been endowed with by fate. The dogs are in the house, and, by the Lord! they must just stay there. I don't suppose, anyhow, it's the dogs will ever ruin

me, Michel. Only, for their own welfare, see to it they are not thirteen for the future."

"Well, sir, I'll drive one away, and make them a dozen."

"No, Michel, let another one come in, so as to make fourteen."

Michel heaved a sigh.

"If it were a pack, that would be something," he muttered.

Well, it was a pack—and a very strange pack at that. There was a wolf-dog, a poodle, a water-spaniel, a mastiff, a basset-hound with twisty legs, a mongrel terrier, a mongrel King Charles,—there was even a Turkey dog with never a hair on his body except a tuft on the top of the head and a plume at tip of his tail.

Well, all this crew lived together on the very best of terms, and might have given an example of brotherly love to a philanstery or a community of Moravian brethren. True, at meal times there would be a snap now and then to right or left; there would be some love quarrels between rivals, in which, as always, the weaker would go to the wall; but the most touching harmony would be instantly restored the moment I appeared in the garden. Not an animal, no matter how lazily stretched in the sun, no matter how luxuriously curled up on the soft turf, no matter how amorously engaged in conversation with a canine mistress, but would break off his sleep or love-making to sidle up to me with affectionate eye and waving tail. All did their best to manifest their gratitude, each in his own way,—some by slipping familiarly between my legs, others by getting up on their hind paws and begging, others again by jumping over the stick I held for them, whether for the Czar of Russia or the Queen of Spain, but positively refusing to leap for the poor

King of Prussia, the humblest and most hackneyed of all monarchs, not only at home but among the canine population of all Europe.

We recruited a little spaniel bitch named Lisette, and the number of our pack was duly raised to fourteen.

Well, these fourteen dogs, when all was said and done, cost me say fifty or sixty francs a month. A single dinner to five or six of my literary brethren would have demanded three times the sum, and then they would have left my house, saying, it may be, my wine was decent stuff, but there was no doubt my books were rubbish.

Among all the pack Pritchard had chosen out a comrade and Michel a favourite. This was a basset-hound with twisty legs, a short, thickset animal, that seemed to walk on his stomach, and at utmost speed might perhaps have covered a league in an hour and a half, but, as Michel was never tired of saying, the finest organ in all the department of the Seine-et-Oise.

It was quite true; Portugo—that was the basset's name—had one of the finest bass voices ever uttered by dog in pursuit of rabbit, hare, or roebuck. Sometimes at night, as I sat at work, these majestic tones would make themselves heard about the neighbourhood, and it was a sound to rejoice the heart of St. Hubert in his grave. Now, what was Portugo after at this hour of the night, and why was he up and about when the rest of the pack were sleeping? The mystery was resolved one morning.

"Would Monsieur like," Michel asked me, "would Monsieur like to have a nice dish of stewed rabbit for his breakfast?"

"Very good," I said; "has Vatrin sent us some rabbits, then?"

"Oh, M. Vatrin! why it's over a year since I've set eyes on him."

"Well, where did they come from, then?"

"Monsieur doesn't need to know where the rabbit came from, provided the stew is all right."

"Take care, Michel, take care; you will get yourself caught one of these days."

"Why, what *do* you mean, sir? I have not so much as touched my gun since the end of the shooting season."

I could see that Michel had made up his mind to tell me nothing that time; but I knew him well enough to be quite sure he would open his lips one day or another.

"Why, yes, Michel," I told him, answering his original question, "I should be very glad to eat a good dish of stewed rabbit."

"Does Monsieur prefer to cook it himself or to let Augustine see to it?"

"Let Augustine attend to it, Michel; I have work to do this morning."

It was Michel waited at breakfast that morning instead of Paul; he wished to see how much I liked his stew.

The much-talked-of dish appeared in due course, and I finished it to the last scrap.

"So Monsieur liked it?" Michel asked, beaming with satisfaction.

"Excellent, excellent!"

"Well, Monsieur can have one like that every morning, if he so pleases."

"What, Michel, every morning? It seems to me you are going ahead pretty fast, my friend."

"I know what I'm talking about."

"Well, Michel, we shall see. Stewed rabbit is very

good; but there is a certain tale entitled *Eel-pie*, the moral of which is we must never abuse a good thing —not even stewed rabbit. Besides, before consuming such a lot of rabbits, I should like to know where they come from?"

"Sir, you shall know this very night, if you will condescend to come with me."

"Did not I say you were a poacher, Michel?"

"Oh no, sir! I'm as innocent as a new-born babe. As I said before, if only Monsieur will come with me to-night . . ."

"Is it far, Michel?"

"Only a hundred yards from this spot, sir."

"What time?"

"When Monsieur hears Portugo's first bark."

"Well, so be it, Michel; if you see a light in my room when Portugo first gives cry, I am your man."

I had almost forgotten I had pledged my word to Michel, and was working away as usual, when about eleven o'clock of a magnificent moonlight night Michel walked into my room.

"Well," said I, "I don't think Portugo has given voice, has he?"

"No," he told me; "but it struck me that, if Monsieur waited till then, he would miss the most curious part of all."

"Why, what should I miss, Michel?"

"Monsieur would not see the Council of War."

"Council of War! What Council of War?"

"The Council of War between Pritchard and Portugo."

"You are quite right; it must be a curious sight."

"If Monsieur will come down now, he can see it."

I followed Michel, and presently, as he had led me to expect, I saw in the midst of the encampment of

the fourteen dogs, lying each as he found most comfortable, Portugo and Pritchard sitting up solemnly on their tails and apparently debating some question of the last importance.

This point decided, the pair separated. Portugo darted out of the gate, struck into the upper Marly road, which bounded the property on that side, and disappeared.

As for Pritchard, he showed every sign of having time to spare, and started off at a leisurely pace to follow the by-path that, after passing alongside the island in the river, mounted the hill behind the quarry.

We in turn set off after Pritchard, who appeared to pay no attention to us, though he had evidently scented our presence.

The dog climbed to the top of the quarry, which was planted with vines extending as far as the Marly road above. There he examined the ground with the utmost care, keeping to the line of the quarry, lighted on a scent, sniffed and found it fresh, advanced a few yards along a furrow formed by a double line of vine-sticks, crouched flat on his belly and waited.

Almost at the same moment Portugo's first bark could be heard five hundred yards away. The plan of campaign was now clear. At nightfall the rabbits always quitted the quarry and scattered to feed. Pritchard would then nose out the scent of one of them, while Portugo, making a wide detour, chased the rabbit. Now rabbits and hares invariably hark back on their own track, and Pritchard, enscreened treacherously in ambush, awaited the creature's return.

And so it was; the nearer Portugo's barks approached, the more brilliantly we saw Pritchard's yellow eyes gleam. Then suddenly, using all four paws as

a sort of quadruple spring, he gave a leap, and we heard a little scream of surprise and distress from the victim.

"The trick's done!" exclaimed Michel, and going up to Pritchard, he took a very fine rabbit out of his jaws, and finished it with a sharp blow on the back of the neck. He disembowelled it there and then, dividing the entrails between the two dogs, who shared them amicably, feeling presumably only one regret, that Michel's interference, backed by my authority, robbed them of the whole to leave them only a part. As Michel said, I might, if I had so desired, have had every morning for breakfast a nice dish of stewed rabbit.

But at that very time things were happening at Paris that made a longer stay in the country impossible.

The Théâtre-Historique was on the point of opening. Now, seeing this is neither a history, nor a novel, nor a primer of literature, but just a friendly talk, dear reader, between you and me, let me tell you in plain words the legend of this unfortunate Théâtre-Historique, which was for a short time, you will remember, the terror of the Théâtre Français and an example to all the other theatres of the capital.

If it had had disasters, it would have been supported by those great abettors of failure known as the Directors of the Beaux Arts; but it had nothing but successes, and the Beaux Arts abandoned it to its fate.

This is how the thing happened. In 1845 or 1846, I cannot now recall exactly which, I was giving, at the *Ambigu*, the first representations of my *Mousquetaires.*

The Duc de Montpensier was present at the first night. One of my good friends, Dr. Pasquier, was his surgeon in ordinary. After the fifth or sixth scene, the Duke sent Pasquier to congratulate me. At the

SUDDENLY PRITCHARD GAVE A LEAP

end of the piece, which had only finished at two in the morning, Pasquier came back to tell me the Duke was expecting me in his box, whither I proceeded.

I had seen little of the Duc de Montpensier hitherto; when his brother died, in July 1842, he was still hardly more than a boy, being seventeen or eighteen at the time, but as a matter of family tradition he was aware that his brother had entertained a great affection for me.

I entered the Duke's box not without emotion; each of these four young Princes has in him certain traits of the elder brother, and at this period I could not help a sharp pang of grief on finding myself in the presence of one of them.

The Duke had sent for me to repeat the congratulations he had conveyed to me before through Pasquier. The young Prince, I was already aware, was an enthusiastic admirer of the series of historical romances I was then publishing, and especially of that epic of chivalry known under the title of *The Three Musketeers.*

"But I am bound," he said on this occasion, "to find fault with you for one thing; why do you have your work produced at a minor theatre?"

"Monseigneur," I told him, "when a man has not a theatre of his own, he gets his pieces played where he can."

"And why have you not a theatre of your own?" he asked me.

"Why, Monseigneur, for the very simple reason that the Government would not give me the needful 'privilege.'"

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"But, if I intervened?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, that might quite likely alter the look of things; but Monseigneur will never take that much trouble."

"Why not?"

"Because I have no claim on Monseigneur's good graces."

"Pooh! who said so? Now, on whom does the granting of a 'privilege' depend?"

"On the Minister of the Interior, Monseigneur."

"Duchâtel, in fact?"

"Precisely so, and I am bound to tell your Highness I don't think he is particularly fond of me."

"At the very next Court ball I will dance with his wife, and arrange the matter before I take her back to her seat."

I do not know whether there was actually a Court ball, or whether the Duc de Montpensier danced with Madame Duchâtel or no; what I do know is that one day Pasquier came to see me and tell me the Duke was expecting me at the Tuileries.

I and Pasquier took a conveyance and drove to the Palace.

"Well," he accosted me the moment he saw me, "your 'privilege' is granted; it only remains for me to ask you the name of the lessee."

"M. Hostein," I told him.

The Duke took down M. Hostein's name in his pocket-book; then he asked me where the house was to be built, what piece we should begin with, what special line I proposed it should follow. I informed him the site was already chosen, namely, the former Hôtel Foulon; that the play I should open with would probably be the *Queen Margot*; that with regard to the line I meant to adopt, this was to constitute the stage of my new theatre a great book in which, every

night, the public might read a page of our national history.

The "privilege" was duly signed in M. Hostein's name; the Hôtel Foulon was purchased; the Théâtre-Historique was built, and it opened, if I remember right, a month after my return from Spain and Africa, with *Queen Margot*, precisely as I had told the Duc de Montpensier it should.

The opening of my theatre, rehearsals, performances, results, endless affairs, in a word, detained me nearly two months in Paris.

The day before that on which I was to return to Saint-Germain, I wrote to tell Michel, and found my factotum waiting for me at the bottom of the hill of Marly.

"Sir," he shouted directly I was within hail, "two great events have happened in the house."

"What are they, Michel?"

"To begin with, Pritchard caught his hind paw in a *trarp*, and going mad with rage and pain, instead of staying caught as any other dog would have done, he gnawed off his foot with his teeth, sir, and came back home on three pins."

"But the poor beast died, I suppose, after it all?"

"Died! why should he die, sir? Wasn't *I* there?"

"And how did you treat him, Michel?"

"I amputated the paw neatly at the joint, with a pruning-knife; I sewed up the skin over the place, and there's no sign of a wound. Look! the scoundrel, he's scented you and here he comes!"

Yes, there was Pritchard, dashing up on three legs, and at such a pace that, as Michel said, he really looked as if he had never lost the fourth.

The greetings between Pritchard and his master were very tender, as you may suppose, on both sides.

I commiserated the poor fellow very much on his mutilation.

"Pooh, sir," said Michel, "it only means that out shooting he won't be so fond of pointing now."

"And your second piece of news, Michel? You told me you had two things to tell me."

"Oh! the other is that Jugurtha is no longer called Jugurtha."

"Why so?"

"Because he's called Diogenes now."

"And the reason?"

"Look for yourself, sir."

We had reached the avenue of ash-trees leading to the main door of the villa. On the left side of the way the vulture was taking its ease in a huge tub, made out of a cask, one end of which Michel had knocked out.

"Ah, yes, I understand," I told the latter; "directly he has a tub——"

"That's it," chorused Michel, "directly he has a tub, he can't be called Jugurtha any more, his name is bound to be Diogenes."

I was lost in admiration of Michel's historical and surgical attainments, just as, a year earlier, I had been dumbfounded at his profound acquaintance with Natural History.

CHAPTER XXXVII

WHICH DEALS WITH MY DÉBUT AS AN ORATOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE YONNE, AND PRITCHARD'S DÉBUT IN THE SAME DEPARTMENT AS A POACHER

A YEAR passed, during which were successively produced at the Théâtre-Historique the *Queen Margot*, already alluded to, *Intrigue et Amour*, *Les Girondins*, and *Monte-Cristo* in two nights' performances. The reader will recall, no doubt, the famous song of the Girondists—*Mourir pour la patrie*; the day it was rehearsed for the first time, I observed to the leader of the orchestra—

"And to think, my dear Varney, that the next Revolution will be made to that tune!"

As a matter of fact the Revolution of 1848 *was* made to the air I had foretold.

While rejoiced to see the principles I have upheld all my life triumphing, while taking a personal part in the Revolution of 1848 almost as active as I had in that of 1830, I was yet sore and grieved at heart.

The political cataclysm, while bringing in new men who were my friends, yet removed others who likewise held a place in my affections. I had a brief and momentary hope that a Regency might be thrown as a connecting bridge between the Monarchy and the Republic. But the revolutionary avalanche was

precipitated with irresistible violence; it swept away with it, not only the old King, not only the four Princes, his stay and support, but even the mourning mother and the weakly child, who knew neither what this tempestuous blast was, nor whence it came, nor whither it was carrying him.

There came a moment in the history of France when nothing stood where once it had, when the place where for seven centuries had risen the throne of the Capets, the Valois, the Bourbons, was mowed as smooth as in September is the plain where a week before the harvest was still waving.

Then France gave a great cry, half of amazement, half of distress; she knew no longer where she was, searching vainly with startled eyes for what she was used to see. She called to her help the most intelligent of her sons, and told them: "See what my people have done in a fit of passion; perhaps they have gone too far, but at any rate what is done is done. In this empty place, which terrifies me by its emptiness, build me up something on which may rest the foundations of society, public wealth, morality, and religion."

I had been one of the first to hear this appeal of my Country, and I held I had a right to count myself in the number of the men of intelligence she was summoning to her aid.

It only remained to decide to what Department I should go and offer myself for election.

It seemed simple enough to address myself to my native Department, that of the Aisne. But I had ceased to reside in it in 1823. I had scarcely ever returned there since, while one of the few occasions I had done so was to carry out that famous expedition of Soissons which the reader knows of, if he has ever read my Memoirs, in which I came very near being shot.

But, although it was for the same cause I was fighting, whether in 1830 or in 1848, I feared I might be looked upon as too ardent a Republican for the Republic such as the majority of the electors wished to see it, and I gave up all thoughts of standing for the Department of the Aisne.

Then right before my eyes was the Department of the Seine-et-Oise, where I had been living for the last four or five years. I had even held in it the eminent position of Chief of Battalion of the National Guard of Saint-Germain. But, inasmuch as, during the three days of the Revolution of 1848, I had had the drums beaten and an appeal made to the seven hundred and thirty men of my command to follow me to Paris and intervene forcibly in the struggle, the wives, children, fathers, and mothers of my seven hundred and thirty National Guards, making a grand total of perhaps three thousand individuals, had all protested with one voice against the recklessness with which I was for endangering the lives of my men. So at the mere suspicion that I might possibly offer myself for election in their town, the good folk of Saint-Germain had uttered a universal cry of alarm and indignation. More than that, they had assembled in general committee and resolved that I should be invited to give in my resignation as Commander of the National Guard for having compromised myself so unjustifiably during the three days of revolutionary disturbance.

You see they understood the question of national representation and the oath of fidelity to the Republic in pretty much the same sense in the Department of the Seine-et-Oise as in that of the Aisne.

Things were in this state when a young man, to whose family I had rendered some services and who had connections, he told me, in Lower Burgundy,

assured me that, were I to offer myself in the Department of the Yonne, I could not fail to be elected. Now I am bursting with a genial simplicity which ill-natured people call self-conceit. Call it simplicity or self-conceit, whichever you please, the result was the same. I imagined myself well enough known even in the Department of the Yonne to out-distance any competitors that might be set up against me. Poor simpleton that I was! I quite forgot the fact that every Department makes a point of having *local* men to represent it, and, alas! my *locality* was the Department of the Aisne. Accordingly, hardly had I set foot in the Department of the Yonne before the journals of all the *localities* rose up in arms against me. What business had I in the Department of the Yonne? Was I a Burgundian? Was I in the wine trade? Had I any vineyards? Had I ever studied the question of vine-growing? Was I a member of the *Société Œnophile*? So I had no Department, it seemed, of my own; I was a sort of political bastard. Or rather no, I was none of these things; I was an agent of the Orléanists, and was offering myself, simultaneously with M. Gaillardet, my collaborator on the *Tour de Nesle*, as a candidate of the Regency party.

Needless to say the men who had invented and disseminated this fine story did not believe one single word of it themselves.

True, I had been injudicious enough, it must be owned, to give some excuse for these statements on the occasion of the Orléans Princes leaving the country. Instead of abusing, insulting, and black-guarding them like the men who, a week before, were dancing attendance in their anterooms, *I*, on March 4, 1848,—that is to say, seven days after the revolution

of February, in the midst of the popular excitement which filled the streets of Paris with noise and clamour, —I had written the following letter in the columns of *La Presse*, one of the most generally read newspapers of that day :—

"*To Monseigneur le Duc de Montpensier*

"PRINCE,—If I knew where to find your Highness, it would be with my own lips, it would be face to face, that I should offer you the expression of my sorrow at the catastrophe that overwhelms you as well as others.

"I can never forget how, for three years, in defiance of all political ties, and contrary to the King's wishes, who was aware of the opinions I held, you were pleased to receive me and treat me almost as a personal friend.

"This title of *friend*, Monseigneur, when you lived at the Tuileries, I was proud of; to-day, when you have left the country, I claim it still.

"However, Monseigneur, your Highness, I am convinced, had no need of this letter of mine to be assured that my heart was of those that are his for all time.

"God forbid I should fail to preserve in all its purity the religion of the tomb and the worship and respect of fallen greatness.

"I have the honour to be, with deep respect, your Royal Highness's most obedient and most humble servant,

"ALEX. DUMAS"

Nor was this all; indeed, I must surely have been bitten by that devil of contradiction which lives in me, is even more powerful than that other devil of pride. The celebrated Colonel Desmoulins, Commandant of the Louvre, having deemed it proper to throw down

the equestrian statue of the Duc d'Orléans which stood in the courtyard of the Louvre, I returned home in a furious passion, and wrote to M. de Girardin the letter given below. The individual for whom it was really intended was plain enough, and it could hardly fail—at least, so I firmly believed—to procure me the pleasure of cutting throats with the Colonel first thing next morning. It ran as follows:—

"My dear Girardin,—Yesterday, as I crossed the courtyard of the Louvre, I saw with astonishment that the statue of the Duc d'Orléans was no longer on its pedestal.

"I asked if it was the people of Paris that had thrown it down; I was informed it was the Governor of the Louvre who had ordered its removal.

"Why is this? Whence this proscription that violates the tombs of the dead?

"When the Duke was alive, whatever constituted in France the advanced section of the Nation had based its hopes on him.

"And it was but justice; for, as every one knows, the Duc d'Orléans was in constant opposition to the King, and he was the victim of a veritable disgrace in consequence of his pronouncement in open council: 'Sire, I had rather be slain on the banks of the Rhine than in a gutter of the Rue Saint-Denis!'

"The people, the French people, that is always just and intelligent, knew and understood this as well as we. Go to the Tuileries and see for yourself which are the only apartments respected by the people: they are those once occupied by the Duc d'Orléans. Why, then, be more severe than the people has been towards this poor Prince, who has the good fortune to belong henceforth only to History?

"The future—the future is the block of marble that events may hew at their pleasure and caprice; the past is the statue of bronze cast into the mould of eternity.

"You cannot annihilate the past. You cannot abolish the fact that the Duc d'Orléans, at the head of the French columns, carried the Col de Mouzaïa. You cannot abolish the fact that for ten years he has given the third part of his civil list to the poor. You cannot abolish the fact that he has repeatedly asked mercy for men condemned to death, and by dint of urgent prayers has won their pardon in several instances. If we can to-day clasp the hand of Barbès, to whom do we owe that bliss? To the Duc d'Orléans!

"Ask the artists who followed his coffin to the grave; summon the chiefest among them—Ingres, Delacroix, Scheffer, Gudin, Barye, Marochetti, Calamatta, Boulanger.

"Call to witness the poets and historians: Hugo, Thierry, Lamartine, de Vigny, Michelet, myself, any others you please—ask them, ask us, if we deem it well his statue should be replaced where once it stood. And with one voice we shall tell you: 'Yes; for it was raised at once to a Prince, a soldier, an artist, to the great and enlightened soul that has gone to the skies, to the noble and kindly heart that has been laid in the earth.'

"The Republic of 1848 is strong enough, believe me, to consecrate this sublime anomaly of a Prince left standing on his pedestal, in face of a Royalty falling from his throne. ALEX. DUMAS"

The journals which accused me of being a *Regentist* candidate may well have done so in all good faith, for I had indeed done all I could to make the exiled

family, now that it was in power no longer, believe I was a *Regentist*, as I had done, when it was in power, whatever I could to persuade its members I was a Republican.

Let me try to explain the contradiction to any who will waste their time in reading what I write.

Compounded of two elements, aristocratic and popular,—the former on my father's side, the latter on my mother's,—no one unites to a higher degree than myself in a single heart at once a respectful admiration of all that is great and noble and a tender and profound sympathy with all that is unfortunate. I have never spoken so much of the Napoleon family as under the younger branch of the Royal Family; I have never spoken so much of the Prince of the younger branch as under the Republic and the Empire. I am a faithful worshipper of those whom I have known and loved in adversity, and I only forget them if they become powerful and prosperous. So no fallen greatness passes before me but I salute it, no merit stretches forth its hand to me but I clasp it. It is when all the rest of the world seems to have forgotten those who are no more in place and power that, like an obstinate echo of the past, I proclaim their name aloud. Why? I cannot say. It is the voice of my heart that awakes suddenly and impulsively, apart altogether from my mind and will. I have written a thousand volumes, composed sixty plays. Open them at random,—at the first page, in the middle, at the end,—you will see I have always advocated clemency, whether peoples were the slaves of kings or whether kings were the prisoners of peoples.

Thus it is a noble and a lowly family I have gathered round me, such as no one has but myself. The moment

a man falls, I go to him, I hold out my hand to him, let him be called the Comte de Chambord or the Prince de Joinville, Louis Napoléon or Louis Blanc. Through whom did I learn the death of the Duc d'Orléans? Through Prince Jérôme Napoléon. Instead of paying my court at the Tuileries to those in power, I was at Florence offering my sympathy to the exile. True, I instantly left the exile to seek the dead, and started on a journey of five hundred leagues, to meet, in spite of my very sincere tears of mourning, a Royal rebuff at Dreux—fit pendant to that which awaited me at Claremont, when, after having followed out of affection the funeral of the son, I thought propriety demanded I should attend the father to the grave.

On the eve of July 13 I was the declared enemy of M. Ledru-Rollin, whom I was in the habit of attacking daily in my journal *Le Mois*; on July 14 M. Ledru-Rollin sent me word to have no further anxiety—that he was in safety.

This is why I am more often a visitor to prisons than to palaces; this is why I have been thrice to Ham, once only to the Élysée, never to the Tuileries.

Naturally, I had not vouchsafed all these explanations to the electors of the Yonne; so, when I entered the great hall of the Club, where three thousand persons awaited me, I was received with sounds that betokened anything but friendliness.

At that critical moment a coarse insult was launched at me. Unluckily for the individual who took this liberty, he was within reach of my hand. The gesture with which I answered him was striking enough to leave no one present in doubt as to its nature. Groans changed to yells, and it was amid a perfect hurricane of protest I mounted the tribune to speak.

The first question asked me was a demand for

explanations of my *fanatical* attitude with regard to the Duc d'Orléans. This was taking the bull by the horns indeed. But for once the bull proved the stronger. I made them all feel shame—some for their forgetfulness, the rest for their ingratitude. I reminded them of the cry of universal sorrow that rose, on July 13, 1842, from the heart of thirty million Frenchmen, and brought me, five hundred leagues away, the fatal news. I pictured the poor Prince, young, handsome, gallant, graceful, artistic, a Frenchman to the finger-tips, a patriot if ever there was one. I spoke of Antwerp, the Col de Mouzaïa, the Portes-de-Fer, the respite of Bruyant the huzzar, granted at my instance, the pardon of Barbès, accorded to Victor Hugo's prayers. I repeated some of his sayings, so full of wit they might have fallen from the lips of Henri IV; others so replete with genial kindliness they could only have come from his own heart. The end was that in a quarter of an hour half my audience were in tears—and I with them; in twenty minutes, the whole room was clapping hands; and from that evening forth I possessed not merely three thousand votes but three thousand friends.

What has become of these three thousand friends whose names I never knew? God knows! They are scattered, each carrying away in his heart the precious bit of gold we call a kindly memory. Two or three only have survived from this great shipwreck of time, which will end by engulfing these likewise, and me with them; but these not only have remained friends, but have become brothers—brothers in friendship, brothers in St. Hubert's mysteries.

There, you see we have made a wide digression, but we have come back, nevertheless, at last to the point from which we set out—Pritchard, to wit.

I had been invited to attend the forthcoming opening of the shooting season in the vineyards of Lower Burgundy.

As every sportsman knows, every wine-growing country has two opening days instead of one: that when the wheat-crops are cleared, and the other when the vintage is complete—in other words, every wine district has two false opening days and no true one at all.

It will easily be understood that in those after-dinner stories that amuse a company of gunners Pritchard and his exploits had not been forgotten. I had done my best by word of voice to tell the same tales which I have narrated with pen and ink to the reader. Consequently, Pritchard had been invited no less than his master, and his coming was awaited with equal impatience.

We feared only one thing—that Michel's amputation of one of the poor animal's hind paws would ruin the speed of those evolutions of which I have tried to convey some idea, and which formed Pritchard's distinctive character and originality.

I thought myself justified in declaring beforehand this would not be the case, and that Pritchard was strong enough and clever enough to give a leg to the best dog in Burgundy, even though the missing one were a hind leg.

On October 14, the eve of the opening day in the vineyards, I arrived at the house of my good friend Charpillon, notary at Saint-Bris, advising his cook by telegraph to let nothing interfere with her preparations for dinner.

Within an hour of my reaching my destination there were already three several complaints lodged against Pritchard, any one of which, if the dog had

been a man, would have brought him to a convict prison. There was theft, theft with premeditation, and theft and burglary.

We emptied a hen-house, shoved Pritchard in, and shut to the door on him. A quarter of an hour later I saw his tufted tail waving gaily in the wind.

"Why, who let Pritchard go?" I shouted to Michel.

"Pritchard?—he's not loose."

"Yes, he is; go and look in the hen-house."

Pritchard had effected his escape in the same way as Casanova, by making a hole in the roof.

"Go and fetch the dog," I told Michel, "and put him on the chain."

Michel asked no better. He had fits of anger sometimes in which he would scream, as some parents do at their children—

"Ah! you scamp, you villain! I'll kill you, I will!"

He darted off on Pritchard's tracks eagerly enough. But he searched the three or four streets that make up Saint-Bris in vain; Pritchard had vanished, after giving a final flirt of his tail in the way one friend parting from another waves his handkerchief in farewell.

"Ah!" cried Michel, as he came back panting, "this caps all!"

"What caps all, Michel?"—I had quite forgotten Pritchard for the moment.

"The scoundrel is gone off on his own account."

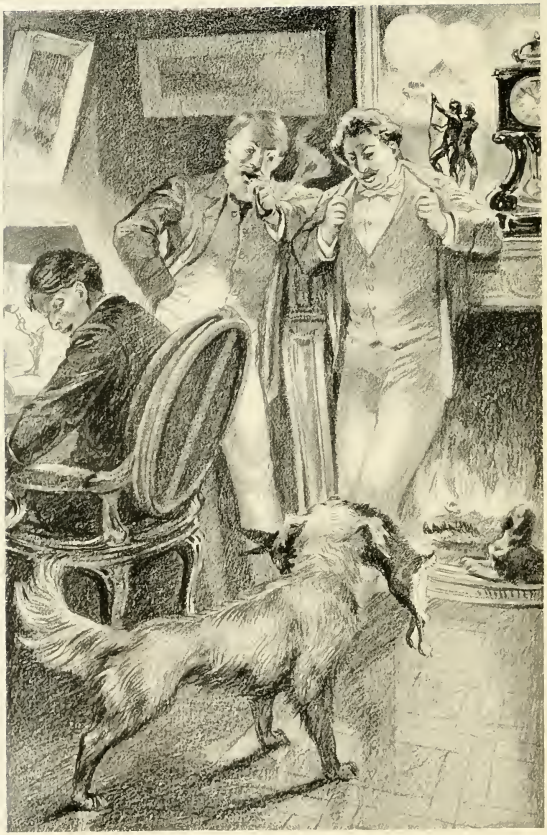
"Gone where?"

"Why, after game, to be sure."

"Oh! you are talking of Pritchard."

"Of course I am. Clean impossible to lay hands on him, and the curious part of it is, he has debauched Rocador into the bargain."

"What! debauched Rocador, do you say?"



PRITCHARD WALKED IN PROUDLY, HOLDING IN HIS JAWS A MAGNIFICENT GREAT HARE

"Impossible!" protested Pierre. Pierre was M. Charpillon's Michel.

"Impossible, and pray why?"

"Rocador was on the chain."

"Oh, if Rocador was really on the chain——" I put in.

"Let him tell his story," urged Michel.

"Yes, an iron chain as thick as my little finger," resumed Pierre, taking advantage of the permission.

"And at the end of the chain what was there?" asked Michel.

Then, winking one eye at me, "Listen," he said.

"Lord! at the end of the chain, what was there at the end of the chain? Why, a ring fixed into the wall."

"I'm not asking you about that end," snapped Michel; "I want to know about the other end."

"Oh! at the other end there was Rocador's collar."

"Made of what?"

"Why, leather, to be sure!"

"Well, he has done the friendly thing by him; he has bitten through the collar with his teeth. Go and look at it, and you'll find it cut clean through as if with a knife." We went to examine the collar, and saw that Michel had not exaggerated one whit.

There was no further news of Pritchard till ten that night; at ten we heard a scratching at the main door. Michel, who was on the look-out, went and opened.

Then I knew by Michel's loud exclamations that something altogether unexpected was toward. A moment more, the cries of astonishment coming nearer and nearer, the door of the salon opened, and Pritchard walked in proudly, holding in his jaws a magnificent great hare, entirely uninjured except for having been throttled.

Rocador had halted when he came to his kennel, into which he had slipped quietly. Both dogs, like a pair of bandits, were drenched with blood.

Others who did not know Pritchard could not reconcile the uninjured condition of the hare with these bloody stains that denounced the two accomplices.

But Michel and myself understood, and exchanged a knowing wink.

"Come, Michel," I said. "I can see you are dying to tell the company how the deed was done. Now, Michel, tell your story."

Michel caught the ball on the hop.

"Why, look you," he began at once, "the dog's that artful. He went to Rocador and said, 'Would you like to go hunting with me, eh?' Rocador answered, 'You can see for yourself, I can't; I'm on the chain.' 'Idiot,' returned Pritchard; 'just you wait a bit'—and he proceeded to free him from his collar. Then the pair set out together. Soon they discovered where a hare had gone by; Pritchard lay down and watched the line, sending Rocador on to turn the hare. The instant the animal came back on his tracks after his first break away, Pritchard pounced on him and throttled him. Then, as two good comrades should, they shared their first hare for their dinner."

Pritchard listened with the deepest attention to what Michel was saying; his own name, recurring as it did every other minute, showed him we were talking about him.

"Isn't that the way it happened, eh, Pritchard?" Michel asked him.

Pritchard gave a short, sharp bark that was evidently, in dog language, the equivalent of the adverb *precisely*.

"Yes, but the other hare?" asked one of the bystanders; "the one there . . . ?"—and he pointed to the dead hare lying on the floor.

"All right, we're coming to that!" Michel replied imperturbably. "The first hare eaten, Rocador said, 'Pon my word, Pritchard, I'm quite satisfied. I've dined deuced well. I vote the best thing we can do now is just to trot back home.' But Pritchard, who is a finished scamp, said, 'What! home . . .?' 'Yes, home, home, to be sure,' repeated Rocador. 'And what shall we find waiting for us at home, eh?' asked Pritchard. 'Oh! the devil!' groaned Rocador, 'what?' 'Why! a sound thrashing; I know Michel,' said Pritchard. 'Yes, and I know Pierre,' agreed Rocador. 'Well, then,' went on that artful Pritchard, 'we must disarm 'em.' 'But how?' 'Let's look out for another scent, catch another hare, and take this one back to our masters.' Rocador made a wry face; his belly was full, and he had no mind to go hunting. But Pritchard said roundly, 'It's no use pulling long faces, my fine friend; you've got to hunt, and quick's the word too, or you'll have news of me!'—and he showed his teeth to Rocador, as if he were grinning. Rocador saw who was master, and set off again obediently. Presently they caught a second hare. Pritchard broke his back with a quick bite, and brought him in, like the cunning beast he is.—Isn't that it, Pritchard?"

The audience looked at me for confirmation.

"Gentlemen," I told them gravely, "if Pritchard could speak, he would tell you precisely the same tale as Michel has—not a word more or a word less!"

"Pierre," said the master of the house, "take that hare to the larder. Well, at any rate, we are sure of to-morrow's dinner."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AN IMPECCABLE MAGISTRATE

THUS we have seen Pritchard triumphing by dint of the very sin he had committed, and forgiven his escapade for the sake of the dish he had provided for next day. You can see indeed how greatly his training had improved him since the days of his sojourn with Vatrin. Then he used to carry off the day's dinner; now he supplied it!

But it is time, without deserting Pritchard, to say something of the fowls—one of the main subjects of our fascinating book.

M. Charpillon loves his profession and is passionately fond of sport, but above all else he is a fanatical poultry fancier.

No fowl, for ten leagues round, can be compared to the meanest bird belonging to M. Charpillon; this was proved at the last show at Auxerre, where Charpillon's fowls carried off a first medal. It is brahmas and cochin-chinas he particularly favours.

Needless to add our friend is not one of those heartless breeders who are inhuman enough to eat what they rear. Once elected an inmate of Charpillon's henyard, once adjudged worthy of his feathery harem, a fowl has neither spit nor stew-pan to fear. It is assured of a happy life to the final term of a fowl's existence.

Charpillon has even gone so far as to have the

inside of his hen-house painted green, so that, albeit shut indoors, his fowls may think themselves in a meadow. For the first few days after the paint was applied to the walls, the illusion was so great that the birds actually refused to come into the hen-house at evening, for fear of catching a chill. But they were forced to go in, and shut inside, so that before long, small as is a fowl's capacity for learning a new fact, the stupidest understood that she had the good fortune to belong to a master who knew his Horace and had successfully solved the problem of "combining the useful with the agreeable."

Once convinced, thanks to the green hue of their surroundings, that they were laying in the grass, Charpillon's fowls laid with greater confidence and therefore more abundantly. What with other hens is a pain which they manifest by a cry, which in our ignorance we take for a song of triumph, became for them a mere diversion, in which they indulged with unfailing regularity night and morning.

Thus their fame, now at its apogee, began to spread abroad throughout the Department.

Whenever they ventured forth into one or other of the three streets of Saint-Bris, if any stranger, unaware of the marvel sheltered by that Burgundian village, exclaimed, "Oh, what beautiful fowls!" a better-informed voice would instantly reply, "Why, I should think so; those are M. Charpillon's birds!"

Then, supposing the owner of the voice endowed with an envious temper, he would never fail to add, in a peevish tone—

"I should think so indeed!—fowls who have every mortal thing they can wish!"

M. Charpillon's fowls, to say nothing of the prizes they had won at the last show, had, in fact, reached

the highest degree of fame and popular renown to which any hens, be they as cochin-chinese as they may, can ever reasonably hope to attain.

But this renown, precluding any possibility of incognito, sometimes involved its inconveniences.

One day the *Garde-Champêtre* came with a look of great embarrassment to see Charpillon.

"Monsieur Charpillon," he said, "I have just caught your fowls among the vines."

"My fowls! Are you sure, Coquelet?"

"Good Lord, sir! they are easy enough to know, your fowls—the finest birds in all the Department!"

"Well, and what did you do?"

"Nothing; I have come to inform you of the facts."

"You are in the wrong; you ought to have drawn up a *procès verbal*."

"But . . . but, Monsieur Charpillon, I thought, as you are deputy-mayor——"

"All the more reason; as a magistrate, I am bound to give a good example."

"Oh, for such a trifle; it's only once in a way the poor creatures have gone astray!"

"They are doubly to blame. They lack for nothing here; so, if they go marauding among the vines, it can only be because they have the bump of thieving. We must not give their evil instincts time to develop. Come, a good *procès verbal*, Coquelet! a good *procès verbal's* the thing!"

"But, Monsieur Charpillon——"

"Coquelet, as deputy-mayor, I give you my express order."

"Yes, but who am I to deliver my report to, sir?"

"To the mayor, man alive!"

"You know quite well that M. Gaignez is in Paris."

"Well, then, you must give it in to me."

"To you?"

"Certainly."

"And you will sanction a report drawn up against your own fowls?"

"Why not?"

"Ah! in that case, it's a different matter. . . . But you know, Monsieur Charpillon——?"

"Yes, Coquelet?"

"I am not very good at drawing up reports."

"Why, it's not a very difficult affair drawing up a *procès verbal*."

"There are reports *and* reports, Monsieur Charpillon."

"Come now, look here: 'I, the undersigned, Garde-Champêtre, hereby declare myself to have recognised and seized sundry fowls, the property of M. Charpillon, notary and deputy-mayor of the commune of Saint-Bris, trespassing among the vines of Monsieur So-and-so or of Madame Such-and-such' There's your report for you!"

"It was among M. Raoul's vines, as a matter of fact."

"Very well; put 'among M. Raoul's vines,' and sign your name, 'Coquelet,' at the bottom."

"My signature, yes, I can manage that, Monsieur Charpillon; I have taken pains about that. But for the writing——"

"Ah, yes, I see. Your hand is a bit given to zigzags, eh?"

"Oh, if that were all! . . . Why, I saw the other day a printed piece of music that was all zigzags."

"Who writes your reports usually, then?"

"The schoolmaster."

"Well, then, go and fetch the schoolmaster."

"He won't be at home to-day; it's a whole holiday."

"Go to-morrow, then."

"He won't be there to-morrow either; it's a half-holiday."

"Coquelet," said Charpillon, frowning sternly, "you're inventing excuses to avoid reporting against me!"

"Why, yes, Monsieur Charpillon. You see, I draw up a report against you to-day, and you're as pleased as Punch! But later on you might not like it so well, and I should not like to get into hot water with the deputy-mayor, you know."

"Very well, Coquelet," said Charpillon, "I will take the responsibility off your shoulders"—and taking a sheet of official paper out of the drawer of his desk, Charpillon drew out a full and formal *procès verbal*, that only needed Coquelet's signature to be complete. This Coquelet did not hesitate to append, seeing his responsibility in a way covered by the fact of his superior having written the document.

The report was duly sent in, and a fortnight later Charpillon had to appear before the court at Auxerre.

There he defended himself — or rather accused himself. He admitted the offence, made himself responsible for his fowls' depredations, and rebutted the extenuating circumstances which the Procureur de la République insisted on.

Accordingly, Charpillon was condemned to the maximum penalty: to wit, fifteen francs' fine and costs.

But a great and noble example was given to the commune of Saint-Bris and all the neighbouring villages. And surely a noble example is cheap at fifteen francs!

All the same, Charpillon's fowls had some excuse for their unseemly conduct. The heavy diet on which their master fed them, bringing them little by little to the condition of fatted pullets, was proving detrimental to their regular laying. What the *procès verbal* spoke of as sheer greediness was really and truly a hygienic pre-

caution suggested by Nature herself to the poor birds, like that which sets dogs eating a particular laxative grass.

One of our friends, a doctor, and a good doctor too, Dr. Drouin, condescended to offer this explanation to our modern Aristides—an account of the matter that told altogether in favour of the feathered sinners.

The fact is, the hens were really laying with ever-decreasing frequency. Charpillon accordingly gathered grapes from the vines, and giving them to his fowls, re-established the equilibrium which had been temporarily disturbed.

Not only did the fowls resume their regular laying during the grape harvest, but more than that, thanks to the lettuce and chicory leaves supplied in lieu of the missing grapes, they went on laying in those months when, as a rule, the process slackens off or even ceases altogether.

Charpillon therefore, when inviting me to his shooting party, knowing my predilection for fresh eggs, had not feared to write—

"If only you will come, dear Dumas, you shall eat eggs such as you have never tasted in all your life."

Accordingly, I had come to Saint-Bris, not only in the hope of seeing a friend I love like a brother, not only in the hope of killing hares and partridges galore on M. Gaignez's and M. Raoul's lands, but also in the expectation of eating such eggs as I had never tasted in all my life.

On the day of my arrival, I am bound to say, my fondest hopes, and even Charpillon's own, were more than fulfilled: at breakfast appeared the finest possible eggs, of the finest possible colour—eggs whose superior quality I had ardently appreciated as only an accomplished gourmet can.

But, alas! the succeeding days showed a lamentable falling off.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DISCUSSING THE ERUDITE QUESTION: WAS IT THE TOADS TAUGHT THE DOCTORS TO BE ACCOUCHEURS, OR THE DOCTORS TAUGHT THE TOADS?

NEXT day, in fact, the daily supply of eggs was reduced from eight to three, and even these three were found in the highest nests of all. The same evening even there, in the most inaccessible laying places, nothing at all was to be found.

Never before had such a thing been known, not even at the period when the brahmas and cochin-chinese had felt the sorest need of grapes or green stuff.

We did not know whom to suspect; but it is only fair to Charpillon to say this much, that he suspected all and sundry before he could believe it was his beloved fowls' fault. A certain vague distrust was even beginning to penetrate his mind in connection with his lad-of-all-work, whom he had hitherto implicitly trusted. But at this juncture I saw Michel hovering uncertainly about us.

I knew Michel's little ways, and saw at once he wanted to speak to me. I asked him if this was the case, and he replied—

"Yes, sir, I *should* just like to say a word or two to you."

"In private?"

"It *would* be better certainly, for the sake of Pritchard's reputation."

"Oh ho! has the scamp been at some of his tricks again?"

"Does Monsieur remember what his *avocat* said to him one day, when I was there?"

"What he said to me, Michel? Nay, my *avocat* is a man of infinite wit and infinite good sense; he says so many witty and wise things whenever we have a talk together that, for all my wishes to remember them all, I always end by forgetting some."

"Well, he told you this: 'Find who profits by the crime, and you will find the criminal.'"

"Yes, I recall that axiom perfectly, Michel. But what then?"

"Well, sir, who can profit by the stolen eggs if not that scoundrel of a Pritchard?"

"Pritchard! So you think it is Pritchard steals the eggs? Come, come! Pritchard, who will retrieve an egg without breaking the shell!"

"Monsieur should say, 'Who used to retrieve . . .'"

"How so, Michel?"

"Pritchard is a beast full of evil instincts, sir; if he doesn't come to a bad end, well, I shall be surprised."

"So, Michel, Pritchard is fond of eggs?"

"As far as that goes, Monsieur is partly to blame."

"What! I am to blame because Pritchard is fond of eggs? I am to blame, eh?"

"Yes, Monsieur is partly to blame."

"Well, well, Michel, this is a bit too strong! It is not enough that I am told my writings are perverting all my generation, but you must join my detractors and tell me my example is ruining Pritchard!"

"Does Monsieur remember one day at the Villa

Médicis when he was eating a boiled egg, and M. Rusconi, who was at table, said something so supremely silly that Monsieur dropped his egg on the ground?"

"Why, had I no egg-cup, then, Michel?"

"No, Monsieur; Alexis had broken them all."

"So I dropped my egg?"

"Yes, sir; dropped it on the polished floor."

"Yes, I remember the incident quite well, Michel."

"And does Monsieur remember calling up Pritchard, who was busy tearing up a bed of fuchsias in the garden, and making him lick up the remains of the egg?"

"I do not remember about his tearing up a fuchsia bed, Michel, but I do recall having made him lick up my egg."

"Well, sir, that was his undoing—that and nothing else."

"Whose undoing?"

"Why, Pritchard's. Oh, he's the sort doesn't want showing twice how to go wrong!"

"Michel, you really are so long-winded——!"

"It's no fault of mine; Monsieur will always interrupt me."

"You are right, Michel, and I am wrong. Come now, tell me, how did I show Pritchard the way to go wrong?"

"By making him eat an egg. You understand, the creature was as innocent as the new-born babe; he didn't so much as know what an egg was; he thought it was a badly shaped billiard ball! But then you made him eat one; good! Now he knows what an egg is! . . . Three days after that, M. Alexandre comes to the house, and complains of his dog's being heavy-jawed. 'Ah! Pritchard's the dog,' I tell him, 'for a tender mouth! You shall see how he retrieves an

egg without breaking it.' Thereupon I go and fetch an egg from the kitchen. I put it down on the grass and say to Pritchard, 'Go fetch, Pritchard!' Pritchard doesn't need to be told twice, but do you know what he does then, the cunning beast? . . . A few days before that, M. Chose, you know, who has a nervous tic, a sort of spasm, you remember, of the jaws——"

"Yes."

"You remember he came to see you?"

"Yes, quite well."

"Pritchard pretended all the while he noticed nothing particular; but mind you, with his yellow eyes, nothing ever escapes him! Suddenly he pretends he's got the same trick as M. Chose, and snap! there's the egg broken. Pritchard, as if ashamed of his awkwardness, makes all haste to gulp down the lot—white, yolk, and shell. I imagine it's just an accident, and go off for another egg; but he had hardly gone three steps with the egg in his jaws when the same spasm took him again. Crack! and the second egg was smashed. I begin to suspect something! Nevertheless, I go and fetch a third . . . if I had gone on, sir, I might have cleared the kitchen! The end was that M. Alexandre, who's a fine hand at chaffing, said to me, 'I say, Michel, you may possibly train Pritchard to be a good musician or a fine astronomer, but you'll never make him anything but a bad broody hen!'"

"But how is it you never said a word about this, Michel?"

"Because I felt humiliated, sir."

"Oh, come, Michel! you must not identify yourself so much as all that with Pritchard!"

"But that's not all."

"What! not all?"

"No; the scoundrel has grown a perfect fanatic after eggs."

"Pooh, pooh!"

"I tell you he was going to devour all M. Acoyer's eggs, only M. Acoyer came and informed me about it. Where do you suppose he got his foot cut off?"

"You told me yourself—in some park, where he forgot to read the notice to trespassers."

"Monsieur need not joke; I believe, for my part, the scoundrel knows how to read."

"Oh, Michel, Michel! . . . Pritchard has crimes enough laid to his charge without being accused of that. . . . But to come back to Pritchard's mutilated paw. Where do *you* think the accident happened him, Michel?"

"Why, in some hen-house, sir."

"But it was in the night the thing occurred, Michel, and at night-time hen-houses are locked up."

"What difference does that make?"

"Come, you are not going to have me believe he can get through a hole only big enough for a fowl!"

"But, sir, he has no need to get into the hen-houses to eat the eggs."

"Why, how does he manage, then?"

"He charms the hens. Look you, sir, Pritchard is what they call a 'charmer.'"

"Why, Michel, you surprise me more and more every word you say!"

"Yes, sir! yes, sir! it's quite true. At the Villa Médicis he used to charm the hens . . . I thought M. Charpillon's hens, which I had heard tell of as quite extraordinary and exceptional fowls, would not be so foolish as the Villa Médicis ones; but I see now hens are just the same everywhere."

"And you think Pritchard——?"

"Yes, he charms M. Charpillon's hens; that's why they don't lay—or rather, why they don't lay any more except for Pritchard."

"By the Lord, Michel, I should very much like to know how he sets about charming M. Charpillon's fowls!"

"Doesn't Monsieur know about the manners and customs of the batrachians?"

I have already mentioned that Michel was a constant source of admiration to me by reason of his acquirements in the domain of Natural History.

"Good!" I said. "So now we are getting to the toads! What the deuce has Pritchard to do with toads?"

"Monsieur is aware that it is the toads who gave the doctors lessons in the art and practice of accouchement, just as it is the frogs taught men to swim?"

"Neither one nor the other of these facts is proved to my mind, Michel."

"Still we have the toad acting as accoucheur, there's no doubt about that. Does Monsieur suppose it was the doctors taught him the trick?"

"No, no; I am quite sure of that much."

"But it must either have been the toads," retorted Michel, "that taught the doctors the art, or the doctors that taught the toads. Now, seeing there were toads before there were doctors, it is probable it was the doctors who learnt the lesson from the toads."

"Well, after all is said and done, that may be so, Michel."

"Oh, it is so, sir! I am certain of it."

"Well, and what then? Tell me now, what possible resemblance is there between Pritchard and the accoucheur toad?"

"This resemblance, sir—that just as the toad serves as accoucheur to the female toad, Pritchard does the same to the hens."

"Bravo, Michel! you do let your fancy run away with you. What a fantastic idea, my man!"

"No, sir, no; not a bit of it! Get up early to-morrow morning; your window looks out on to the hen-house. Peep out through your blind, and you'll see . . . well, you'll see something you have never seen before, there!"

"Why, Michel, to see something I have never seen before—I who have seen so many different things, and amongst others sixteen changes of Government—not only will I gladly get up at any hour you please, but I won't go to bed at all, if necessary."

"There's no need for that, sir; if Monsieur wishes, I'll wake him."

"Do so, Michel—all the more as we are starting for the shooting at six o'clock in the morning, so that you won't be robbing me of much sleep after all."

"Is that agreed?"

"Yes, Michel, that's settled. But every night," I further objected, ashamed to seem to assent to a thing I believed to be a mere hallucination on Michel's part, "every night they shut the gate in the trellis separating the smaller yard from the main yard; so how can Pritchard get in? Does he jump over the trellis?"

"Monsieur will see, Monsieur will see all in good time."

"What shall I see?"

"The truth of the old proverb: 'Tell me how you get in, and I'll tell you who you are.'" Michel, it will be recollected, was in the habit of introducing sundry variations into the generally accepted orthography of certain words, and the same holds good of his quotation

of certain proverbs. He had just given me a fresh proof of this peculiarity.

Next morning at daybreak Michel came to wake me.

"If Monsieur will take up his post of observation," he said, "it's time now."

"Here I am, Michel, here I am!" I cried, springing out of bed.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit! . . . let me open the window softly. If the scoundrel had the smallest inkling he was being watched, he wouldn't stir from his kennel. Monsieur has no idea how cunning the villain is."

Michel opened the window with all possible precautions. Looking between the slats of the blinds, one could see perfectly well both the smaller court where the hen-house was and Pritchard's kennel.

The scoundrel, as Michel called him, was lying in his kennel, his nose reposing innocently on his two paws.

In spite of all Michel's care in opening the window, Pritchard half unclosed one yellow eye, and cast a look in the direction from which the sound came. But as the noise was slight and momentary, Pritchard concluded there was no call to take any great notice of it.

Ten minutes afterwards we heard the hens clucking. At the first cluck Pritchard opened not one eye but both, stretched himself like a dog waking up, looked all round about him, and seeing the yard was entirely deserted, slipped into a sort of wood-house, and next moment poked his head out at a skylight.

The yard was as solitary as ever. Then Pritchard stepped from the skylight on to the roof. The roof sloped very gently, and the dog had no difficulty in reaching the part that overhung the smaller yard on one side.

To reach the level of the yard only needed a jump of half a dozen feet, and this a downward leap. This offered no obstacle to Pritchard; in the days when he had all four paws, he could easily have managed it from below upwards.

Once in the poultry-yard, he lay down flat on his belly, his fore-paws wide apart, his nose pointing towards the hen-house, and uttered a little friendly cry of greeting.

In a few seconds' time the egg was laid. But we had barely time to see it; it was swallowed before ever it touched the ground.

The bird, once safely delivered, got up on its legs, shook its crest, and fell to scratching merrily in the dunghill, making way for another, which instantly came forward to take its place.

In this way Pritchard gobbled up four eggs one after the other—just as Saturn devoured, under similar circumstances, the offspring of Rhea.

True, Pritchard had the advantage of Saturn on the point of morality. It was not his own children he was devouring, but creatures of different species from his own, and over which he possibly believed he had the same rights as mankind.

"Well," Michel asked me, "Monsieur will cease to wonder now that Pritchard has so fine and clear a note . . . for Monsieur is aware that singers are in the habit of swallowing every morning two eggs just that very moment laid to improve their voices?"

"Yes; but what I do not know, Michel, is how Pritchard is going to get out of the poultry-yard."

"You think he's in a fix? Why, look at him, I say——"

"But, Michel——"

"There, do you see what he's after, the scoundrel?"

The fact is, Pritchard, seeing his morning's harvest was gathered in, and possibly because he heard some one stirring in the house, got up on his hind leg, and passing one of his front paws through the trellis, lifted the latch, and so made his exit.

"And when you think," said Michel, "that if we were to ask him why the door of the poultry-yard is open, he would declare it's because Pierre forgot to shut it yesterday evening!"

"You really think he would be base enough to say that, Michel?"

"Perhaps not to-day, perhaps not to-morrow, because, you see, he's not yet full grown,—dogs, you know, continue to grow till four years old,—but one day, one day, don't you be surprised to hear him speak. . . . Ah! the scoundrel; it's not Pritchard we should call him, but brigand, bandit!"

CHAPTER XL

IN WHICH PRITCHARD HAS THE CALAMITY TO ENCOUNTER A CANON FULBERT WITHOUT HAVING MET A HÉLOÏSE

THIS achievement, of which our host was informed just as we were starting for the day's shooting, stirred him more to wonder and admiration than to sympathy with Pritchard. It was agreed that, directly we got back, the dog should be put in the stable, and the door bolted and padlocked.

Pritchard, without the least suspicion of what was plotting against him, was running on ahead along the high-road, lashing the air with his tail.

The sportsmen had meantime taken up their positions.

"You know," Charpillon said to me, "that neither men nor dogs must trespass among the vines. Gaignez as Mayor and myself as Deputy are bound to give a good example. So keep an eye on Pritchard."

"Very good," said I; "we will look after him."

But Michel, coming up to me—

"If I might advise Monsieur," he said, "while we are still only a short way from the house, you would give me leave to take Pritchard home. I have a notion he'll get us into some scrape about the vines."

"Make your mind easy, Michel; I have thought of a way."

Michel took off his straw hat and made me a bow.

"I knew Monsieur was clever, very clever; but I didn't know he was so clever as all that," he said.

"You will see."

"In that case," insisted Michel, "Monsieur must make haste; there's Pritchard in mischief already."

It was so; Pritchard had just dashed in among some vines. Next instant a covey of partridges rose.

"Hold your dog in!" shouted Gaignez.

"Certainly, Monsieur le Maire," I called back—and I called to Pritchard to come to heel.

But Pritchard knew very well what he had to expect when he had been indulging in pranks of this sort, and he pretended to be deaf as a post.

"Catch him," I ordered Michel; and away he went in pursuit of the dog. Ten minutes after he returned holding Pritchard in a leash.

Meanwhile I had picked out a vine-prop that was as much longer than the general run of vine-props as the middle pin is taller than the others in a set of ninepins. It was perhaps five feet long—a short stature for a man, but a great length for a vine-prop. This I tied on to the animal's neck crosswise, and let him go thus ornamented.

But Pritchard did not give me the satisfaction I had expected in the way of enjoying his embarrassment; he realised at once that with such an arrangement it was out of the question for him to go amongst the vines. He kept along the outside just far enough away from the vines for his vine-prop not to knock against them, dashing forward all the more swiftly as he had open ground to run on.

From that moment it was one oft-repeated cry all along the line—

"Call in your dog Pritchard; call him in, I say! He has just put up a covey of partridges a hundred yards ahead of me!"

"Great God! mind your confounded dog! He has just started a hare for me clean out of range."

"I say, would you very much object if I put a charge of shot into your damned animal? There's no getting any shooting with that brute about."

"Michel," I ordered, "catch Pritchard again."

"Didn't I tell you so, sir? Fortunately, we are still pretty near the house, so that I can easily take him home again."

"No, no; I have another happy thought."

"To stop his running?"

"Well, I had one, anyway, to prevent his going among the vines!"

"Yes, I must say you were successful there; but for the other—unless Monsieur puts hobbles on him as they do with a horse at grass——"

"You are warm, Michel, decidedly warm! . . . only catch Pritchard for me."

"Well and good!" said Michel, "'pon my word! what we are doing is as good sport as shooting"—and he started off, yelling "Pritchard! Pritchard!"

Before long I saw him coming back dragging the dog along by his vine-prop. The animal was sidling along, a partridge in his jaws.

"There, look at the thief! You see he's beginning his tricks again," cried Michel.

"That must be the bird Cabasson has just shot; I can see him searching for it."

"Yes, and Pritchard has collared it. I wanted to bring the scoundrel to you red-handed."

"Well, put Cabasson's partridge in your game-bag; we will give him a pleasant surprise."

"Ah! but what vexes me," observed Michel, "is the opinion the scamp has of you."

"What, Michel, so you think Pritchard has a bad opinion of me?"

"Why, yes, sir, a very low opinion."

"And what makes you think that?"

"His actions."

"Explain, Michel."

"Look here, sir; do you suppose Pritchard does not know, in his soul and conscience, that, when he brings you a bird killed by another gun, it's a theft he's committing?"

"Why, yes, I think he has some suspicion to that effect, Michel."

"Very well, sir, once he knows he is a thief, he takes you for a receiver of stolen goods, eh? Now, sir, remember what the Code says: Receivers are on the same footing as thieves and deserve the same penalties."

"Michel, you open up a whole horizon of new terrors! But there, we are going to try to cure him of running, and when that is accomplished he will be cured of thieving."

"Never, sir; you will never cure that scoundrel of his vices."

"But in that case, Michel, we shall have to kill him."

"Oh, I don't say that, sir! for indeed at bottom I am fond of the beggar! But we might ask M. Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, who spends his life among the most noxious animals, if he cannot think of some remedy."

"Look here, Michel, I think *I* have got hold of one."

As I spoke, I passed Pritchard's right front paw through his collar; in this way, the right front leg being closely attached to the dog's neck, while the

left hind leg was, as we know, cut off at the joint, Pritchard had only two legs left—the left fore leg and the right hind leg.

"Well!" exclaimed Michel, "if he can get along now, he must have the devil inside him, that's all!"

"Let him go, Michel."

Michel released the dog accordingly. The animal stood still a moment in uncertainty and surprise, as if trying to get his balance.

This secured, he began to walk away, then to trot; very soon, getting more and more confident of his equilibrium, he started off at a gallop, running faster, not a doubt of it, on his two legs than another dog would have done with four.

"Well, what do you think of that, sir?" asked Michel.

"It is his confounded vine-prop that serves him as a balancing-pole," I replied, in a tone of considerable disappointment.

"There's a fortune to be made out of that scamp," said Michel; "it's only a matter of teaching him to dance on the tight-rope, and taking him about from fair to fair."

"If you really think so, Michel, you shall put up a rope across the lawn and train him as an acrobat. The worthy Madame Saqui is a friend of mine, and I will ask her to let us enter Pritchard as her pupil. She will not refuse me a little favour like that."

"Oh yes, joke away, sir. But, hark! do you hear that?"

The most awful imprecations sounded from all quarters against Pritchard—and these curses, loud and deep, were presently followed by the noise of a shot, and then by an agonised yelp.

"That's Pritchard's voice, I know," said Michel. "Good! it's only what the brute deserved."

Next moment Pritchard reappeared, carrying a hare in his mouth.

"Why, you said you recognised Pritchard's voice, Michel?"

"Yes, I would take my oath I did."

"But how could he give tongue, holding a hare in his mouth, eh?"

Michel scratched his ear.

"All the same it *was* Pritchard gave voice," he declared. "And more by token—look! he has hardly strength left to bring in the hare."

"Go and see what's wrong, Michel,"—and the man ran off to do as he was told.

"Oh, sir!" he cried, "I knew I was right. The sportsman whose hare he appropriated has sent a charge of shot after the poor beast. His hind quarters are streaming with blood!"

"So much the worse for him! this will cure him perhaps. But, all the same, I should like to know how he contrived to give tongue while he held the hare in his mouth."

"Better ask M. Charpillon. Look! there he comes, running after his hare."

"You know I have just let him have it hot behind, your precious Pritchard?" Charpillon shouted out to me the moment he saw me.

"Never mind; I say you have done quite right."

"He was marching off with my hare!"

"I tell you," put in Michel, "there's no way of curing the thief. He's worse than Cartouche!"

"But if he was marching off with your hare, as you say, he had it in his mouth, I suppose?"

"Why! where would you have him hold it?"

"But how, if he held your hare in his mouth, could he give tongue? Tell me that!"

"He put it down on the ground to give voice, and then picked it up again."

"Well, well," said Michel, "isn't he a cunning brute, now, isn't he?"

By this time Pritchard had come up to me with his hare; but once there, he had collapsed on the ground.

"Deuce take it!" said Charpillon, "can I have hurt him more seriously than I intended? I fired at more than a hundred yards."

Then, without giving another thought to his hare, Charpillon began to examine what injury he might have brought about in Pritchard's rearward arrangements.

The damage turned out to be serious. The dog had received five or six pellets of shot in the posterior portion of his person.

"Oh, poor beast, poor beast!" exclaimed Charpillon. "I would not, for all the hares on earth, have fired that shot if I had known——"

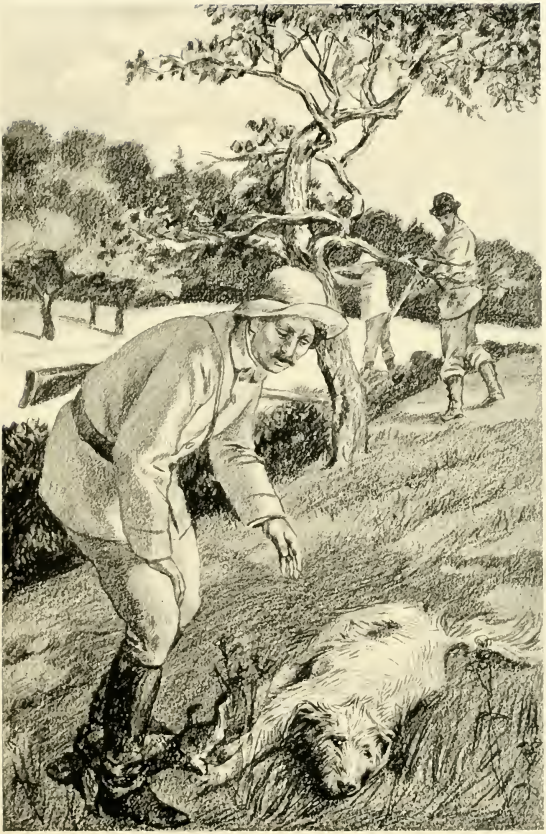
"Pooh!" said Michel, "something worse happened to Abelard—and he didn't die of it."

The end was that, three weeks later, which he spent under the care of the Veterinary at Saint-Germain, Pritchard returned to Monte Cristo, perfectly cured and his tail waving in the wind as of old.

"Well?" I asked Michel.

"Well, sir," he replied oracularly, "all I can say is: half a loaf is better than none at all!"

"So far, so good!"—and I made all haste to send the good news to Charpillon.



PRITCHARD HAD COLLAPSED ON THE GROUND

CHAPTER XLI

A SCENE IN THE CHAMBER

ABOUT the same time at which the calamitous accident I have just related befell Pritchard, a dreadful storm broke out in the Chamber of Deputies.

"Against whom?" you ask.

Against me—and nobody else.

The National Representatives, who had certainly never been intended for any such purpose, were so extremely kind as to busy their heads with poor me.

"About what?" will be your second question.

About that famous journey to Spain and Africa, the cost of which we shared together, the Government and myself, the former contribnting ten thousand francs and I forty thousand.

Every day of the year men were sent on official missions, and every day war-vessels lent for their conveyance; but these were unknown, obscure individuals. So there was nothing to be said.

But for me—that was a very different matter! The fact is, at that date these parliamentary gentlemen were furiously angry with us,—and not without good reason, you must allow.

Eugène Sue was issuing the *Mystères de Paris*, Soulié the *Mémoires du Diable*, Balzac his *Cousin Pons*, I was bringing out *Monte-Cristo*; the result was that the public paid scant attention to prominent politicians,

hardly any at all to the discussions in the Chamber, reserving all their interest for the current *feuilletons*.

The further result was that the worthies of the Chamber were bitterly jealous of the *feuilletonists*, and cried out in scandalised protest against the supposed immorality of these productions as loudly as they were accustomed to shout against breaches of order in the House—and Heaven knows that is loud enough!

So great was the danger to morals, according to them, that they ended by clapping a tax on the *feuilletons* which they had refused to put on dogs. This, by the bye, was a fortunate thing for me, seeing I had at that particular time only three or four *feuilletons* running at once on any one day, whereas, thanks to Pritchard's generous invitations, I had sometimes as many as thirteen or fourteen dogs to dinner.

Once the *feuilletons* were duly stamped, they had no more objections to raise; the tax had made them perfectly moral in a moment.

But still our excellent Representatives were furious at heart. The *feuilleton* still continued its triumphant course. It now carried a black or red ear-mark; it cost the newspaper in which it appeared two or three hundred francs more,—in other words, it brought in to the Government twice as much as it gave the author, which is a highly moral arrangement; but neither readers nor journals could dispense with *feuilletons*.

There were even certain papers whose readers took them in solely for the sake of the *feuilletons*, the result of which was that the said journals were even more furiously angry than the gentlemen of the Chamber.

This was the reason why, whenever I produced a drama or a comedy, I was even more savagely cut

up in those journals which I supplied with *feuilletons* than in those in which my stories did not appear. I may mention the *Siècle*, to which I contributed successively: the *Corricolo*, the *Chevalier d'Harmental*, the *Trois Mousquetaires*, *Vingt Ans Après*, and the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*.

Yet all the while the *Siècle* had found in the insertion of the books I have named no small compensation to make up for the obnoxious tax; for the two or three years my stories had run in this paper, it had been enabled to maintain the smaller size of sheet without loss of *clientèle*.

I had a fine reward for all my trouble when *Bragelonne* was finished. The authorities of the *Siècle* put a blank agreement before my fellow-author Scribe. They thought they had done with me, that I was written out, and so they applied to some one else.

I had been so ambitious as to ask for my *feuilletons*, and the five years' copyright that was to follow, five thousand francs a volume, and they had thought this a very high price.

Scribe for his part modestly demanded seven thousand, and they held this was not enough seemingly; for they made him a present, to clench the bargain, of a silver-gilt inkstand and gold pen.

From this silver-gilt inkstand and this gold pen came *Piquillo Alliaga*!

I consoled myself by proceeding to contribute *Queen Margot*, the *Dame de Monsoreau*, and the *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* to *La Presse*, *Le Constitutionnel*, and *La Démocratie Pacifique* respectively.

A strange fate that of the *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, which, originally contributed to a Republican paper, was to be so helpful to the Republic that, under the Republic, the Director of the Beaux Arts forbade its publication,

for fear it might, after assisting to create the Republican Government, further help to keep it in existence!

However, to come back to the virtuous rage of the Chamber of Deputies. One morning the storm broke, and the lightning descended, not on a lightning-rod or an oak of the forest, but on me, a poor, feeble reed.

One fine day a vexatious attack was made on M. de Salvandy as to the ten thousand francs which he had added to my forty thousand, and a similar storm raised against the King about the twelve thousand francs' worth of coal he had burnt for me, and an accusation levelled against him of undue partiality for men of letters.

Poor Louis Philippe! he had been very often accused, and very unjustly, but never more unjustly than on this count!

Nor was this all. A Deputy, a very serious man—so serious, indeed, he could actually look at himself in the glass without laughing—declared solemnly that the French flag had been degraded by giving us the protection of its shadow.

Two other Deputies chimed in; and the whole opposition applauded.

The same evening the three orators received each of them a communication—

M. *, a letter signed by me;

M. * *, a letter signed by Maquet;

M. * * *, a letter signed by Desbarrolles.

Not trusting the post, and determined these letters should be duly delivered, we sent each of them by the hands of two friends, with injunctions to hand them severally to the several recipients. My two friends were Frédéric Soulié and Guyet-Desfontaines.

I had chosen M. Guyet-Desfontaines for two reasons: because he was my country neighbour at Marly, and

also because his seat was next to M. *'s at the Palais Bourbon. Thus I could be certain of M. * receiving my letter.

This epistle was in the simplest words; there was no possibility of misunderstanding it. It ran as follows:—

"SIR,—Parliament has its privileges, the Tribune its rights; but to every privilege and every right there are limits.

"These limits you have overstepped with regard to me.

"I have the honour to demand satisfaction.

"ALEX. DUMAS"

If I have made any minor error, M. * can set me right, as he is still living.

The other two letters were conceived in almost identical terms. The style of all these was laconic, but perfectly plain.

The three replies were equally plain, and even more laconic—

"We make our appeal to the inviolability of the Tribune."

There was no more to be said.

True, each of us had eight or ten friends on the Press, each armed with a pen, the point of which we could feel from time to time like the sting of a wasp. But not one of them stirred a finger.

But I had a friend of the opposite sex.

A piece of advice, dear readers; directly you put pen to paper to write anything more than your domestic accounts, have friends of the gentler sex, never of the sterner.

Yes, I had a friend,—a good friend indeed. Her name was Madame Émile de Girardin.

It is not so long the adorable being has been in the

grave; you cannot have forgotten her yet. Oh no! all must remember that charming personality, that mind of almost masculine vigour, that intellect that covered the triple octave of grace and wit and power.

Well, woman as she was, she did what no man had dared, or rather, had chosen, to do.

Throughout all the parliamentary discussion, whereof I had been, if not the hero, at any rate the object, not once had my name been mentioned. I had been referred to, not even as M. *, M. * *, or M. * * *, as I have named the three Deputies who had more specially devoted their attention to me at that memorable sitting,—but *monsieur* shortly and simply, or sometimes, by way of variety, *le monsieur* or *ce monsieur*.

The moment the inviolability of the Tribune was called in force, they might call me what they pleased.

Well, Madame de Girardin took by the collar the most aggressive of my three assailants, and with her pretty hand, plump and white and rosy-nailed, she shook him,—how she shook him. . . . But there, why should I not give you the gratification of showing you how she did shake the poor wretch?

It is a woman's writing; but Madame de Girardin and Madame Sand have accustomed us to these miracles—

". . . But at the same time we must be just, and we are bound to recognise that, for all his mistakes, M. Dumas has more than one good and adequate excuse. He has, to begin with, the fiery ardour of his imagination, the fever of his ancestral African blood; and, furthermore, he has an excuse everybody cannot plead — the intoxication of glory. Yes, we should greatly like to see you, you sober, reasonable people, involved in the whirlpool that carries him along; we should like to see what sort of a

figure you would cut if they came to you suddenly to offer you three francs a line for your tiresome scrawls. Oh! how uplifted you would be! what magnificent airs you would assume! how your heads would be turned! how frantic would be your delight! So be more indulgent for errors of taste, for outpourings of proud conceit such as you know nothing of and are incapable of understanding!

"But if we can find excuses for Alexandre Dumas' hotheadedness, we can find none for the wanton attack made on him in the Chamber of Deputies by M. * * *. In this case neither the ardour of imagination, nor the fever of African blood, nor the intoxication of glory, can explain this strange forgetfulness of what is seemly and becoming in a man so well born, so well brought up, who belongs to the most distinguished section of Parisian society.

"*Contractor for feuilletons!* Yes, the vulgar herd may call him that, it is very possible; but then the vulgar herd thinks that necessarily the man who writes much writes ill; the vulgar herd, to which everything is difficult, has a horror of all talent that finds difficulties easy. It holds that, if an author's works are numerous, they must be trumpery; having no time to read all the new romances Alexandre Dumas finds time to publish, it supposes those it has read are the only meritorious and delightful ones, while all the rest are detestable, and explains his marvellous fecundity of output by an assumed mediocrity of talent. That the common herd should fail to comprehend the wondrous possibilities of genius is simple enough, is only what might be expected; but that a young Deputy, one who is reputed a man of wit and intelligence, should thoughtlessly take the side of the vulgar crowd and go out of his way to

make an uncalled-for and useless attack on a man of incontestable ability, of European celebrity, without ever having weighed his merits, or examined the nature of his talents, or reflected whether he really and truly deserved the cruel description it pleased him, in his irony, to bestow on him, this is an instance of reckless injustice that amazes—or should we rather say, shocks and disgusts us.

"Since when has it been usual to reproach talent with the facility of its exercise as with a crime, if this facility in no way militates against the perfection of the result? What cultivator of the soil ever alleged its fertility as a fault against the rich land of Egypt? Who ever blamed its harvests for their precocious maturity, and refused to reap its superb crops under pretext that they had budded, germinated, grown, and ripened in an incredibly short space of time? Just as there are favoured soils, so there are specially privileged individuals. A man is not blameworthy because he is unduly endowed by nature; the crime is not in possessing these precious gifts, but in abusing them. Moreover, for true artists who consider Alexandre Dumas and who have studied his astonishing talent with the interest every skilled physiologist is bound to take in every exceptional phenomenon, this amazing facility of production ceases to be an inexplicable mystery.

"This rapidity of composition is like the speed of locomotion attained on railways. Both have the same principles, the same causes,—an extreme facility won by vanquishing immense difficulties. You travel sixty leagues in three hours; it seems nothing, and you laugh at having performed so swift a journey. But think, to what do you owe this rapidity of travel, this facility of transport? To years of formidable

efforts, to millions spent like water, expended in profusion all along the levelled track, to thousands of arms employed during thousands of days in clearing a way for your passage. You fly past so swiftly as to be almost invisible; but to enable you to go so fast one day, how many men have worked and watched, plied pickaxe and spade! how many plans have been made and abandoned! how much arduous thought, how much wearing anxiety, expended on making the way easy which you traverse in a few short minutes without the smallest pains or trouble! . . . Well, so it is with the talent of Alexandre Dumas. Each volume he writes represents immense preliminary labours, endless studies, a world-wide knowledge. Dumas did not possess this facility twenty years ago, because he did not then know what he knows now. But since then he has learnt everything, forgotten nothing; his memory is appalling, his outlook infallible; he possesses, to guess right, instinct, experience, recollection; he sees true, compares swiftly, understands intuitively. He knows by heart all he has read, he has kept in his brain all the pictures his retina has reflected. The most grave matters of history, the most insignificant of the oldest memoirs, he remembers them all; he speaks familiarly of the manners and customs of all ages and all countries; he knows the names of all weapons, all dresses, all forms of furniture in use since the creation of the world, of all the dishes ever eaten, from the rude Spartan broth to the last dainties concocted by Carême. If he has to describe a hunt, he is acquainted with every word in the *Dictionnaire des Chasseurs* better than a Grand Huntsman; if a duel, he is better instructed than Grisier; if a carriage accident, he will tell you all the technical terms as well as Binder or Baptiste.

"When other authors write, they are stopped every other instant by a question to be resolved, a piece of information to be looked up, a doubt to be settled, something forgotten, some obstacle or other. But he is delayed by nothing; besides which, the habit of writing for the stage gives him the greatest agility of composition. He draws a scene as quickly as Scribe scribbles off a piece for the theatre. Add to all this a brilliant wit, a gaiety and verve that are inexhaustible, and you will perfectly understand how, with such resources, a man can attain in his work an almost incredible rapidity, without ever sacrificing the appropriateness of his diction, without even spoiling the quality and sterling merits of his production.

"And it is a man of this kind they call *un monsieur*! Why! that implies some one unknown, a man who has never written a good book, who has never performed a good action or said a noble word, a man France knows nothing of, whose name Europe has never heard. No doubt, M. Dumas is much less a marquis than M. * * *; but M. * * * is much more *un monsieur* than Alexandre Dumas!"

There, did I not tell you, dear readers, that in literature it was far better to have friends of the gentler than of the sterner sex!

CHAPTER XLII

DEALS WITH THE REVOLUTION OF FEBRUARY, AND THE INFLUENCE EXERTED BY THAT EVENT ON ANIMALS AND MEN

AFTER the political digression we have indulged in à propos of my African journey, let us come back now to my animals, which meantime, thank God! were thinking of anything rather than the Chambers of Parliament, of which, honest beasts! they had never so much as heard.

Fortunately neither did the Chambers ever think of my pets; else, after doing me the honour of interfering in my affairs, they would certainly have done the same with them.

Heaven preserve me from speaking ill of a fallen leader or a form of government that exists no more; but it was a strange machine, that contrivance with three driving-wheels, whereof one was called Molé, the other Guizot, and the third Thiers,—an engine that could only work by the help of one of these wheels, which, directly it was started, found itself blocked by the two others.

The reader will remember the famous tavern score which the Prince of Wales finds in the pocket of the tipsy Falstaff—

"A turkey . . . . Three shillings.
A goose . . . . Two shillings.
Ham . . . . One shilling.
Beer . . . . Six shillings.
Bread . . . . *One penny.*"

Well, for eighteen years our constitutional politics are not unlike Falstaff's score, thus—

Molé and his concerns	.	Six years.
Guizot and his concerns	.	Six years.
Thiers and his concerns	.	Five years, nine months, and three weeks.
France and her concerns	.	*One week.*

From which we must deduct the three days of February, during which France looked after her concerns herself.

One day I will tell the story of the Revolution of February, as I have told that of the Revolution of July; for, from the very fact of my having taken a less active part in the former, I perhaps enjoyed a better view of what was going on.

But for the time being, as I said, I have to do with innocent creatures that have neither fall of Ministry nor overthrow of Throne to reproach themselves with; I have to speak of poor Pritchard, who had only three legs left, and who had just lost an eye in this Revolution of February.

How came Pritchard, of whom there has never been any question whatever in the two volumes of Lamartine or in the *Revue Rétrospective* of M. Taschereau, to have lost an eye in the Revolution of February? Was it on the Boulevard des Capucines? or was it at the attack on the Pont Tournant?

Pritchard lost an eye because, curiosity having drawn me to Paris to see what was going on there, and having called Michel for the same reason to Saint-Germain, no one had remembered to give him his daily feed and regular supply of bones. The consequence was that he had made a raid on the vulture's pittance, and the bird which, like Prometheus' vulture, had no tolerance for any trifling with his heart,

liver and lights, had given Pritchard a well-directed blow with his beak that had neatly knocked out an eye.

The dog was henceforth—unless one was ready to bear endless chaff from fellow-sportsmen—out of the question for shooting purposes.

Fortunately for Pritchard I did not share the opinion of Cato Major,—for whose views or morals I must confess I feel only a moderate degree of admiration,—who says: "Sell your horse when he is old, and your slave when he is infirm; the longer you delay, the more you will lose on each of the pair."

Nor could I have found a purchaser if I *had* wished to sell the animal, nor any one obliging enough to take him, if I had wanted to give him away. Thus there was only one thing left me to do,—viz. to constitute this old servant, bad servant though I considered him to have been, an inmate of the house, a retired veteran, in a word a friend.

Doubtless some will tell me, as I was within a few yards of the river, it would have been the simplest plan just to tie a stone round his neck and chuck him in.

This is what Cato would most likely have done. But there, I am not an ancient Roman; and the Plutarch who will write my biography in days to come, will not fail to say, in modern phraseology, that I was indeed a bottomless basket, of course forgetting to add the qualification that it was not always myself who had knocked the bottom out.

Further, you will tell me there was nothing easier than to replace Pritchard, that I had merely to descend the slope of the hill, cross the bridge of Le Pecq, make for the Forest of Le Vésinet, march into Vatrin's house and buy of him a good, honest, French pointer, such as

we are in the habit of using in our own country, instead of an English dog.

But I have my answer—as I always have—that albeit not so poor as to drown poor Pritchard, I was not rich enough to afford to buy another dog.

Needless to say that, at the noise made by journals bearing such names as the *Père Duchesne*, the *Guillotine*, the *République Rouge*, literature of a purely historical and picturesque scope had fallen to the lowest possible figure.

So, instead of pursuing literature, I had founded a paper called *Le Mois*, and collaborated in the production of another entitled *La Liberté*.

All this brought in thirty-one francs a day. But then the Théâtre-Historique was still on my hands, and this absorbed anything from a hundred to five hundred of the same coins.

True, I had one chance left; waging as I did, in my two journals, a war to the knife with MM. Barbès, Blanqui, and Ledru-Rollin, I had a fair chance of being knocked on the head, one day or another, by the partisans of those gentlemen.

It was plainly a question of instituting a great reform in my household expenses. I sold my three horses and my two carriages for a quarter of what I had given for them. I made a present to the Jardin des Plantes of the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," of Potich, and Mademoiselle Desgarcins. I was likely to be turned out of house and home, but anyway my monkeys were to be transferred to a palace. After revolutions, it happens sometimes that apes are lodged like princes, and princes like apes. Unless, indeed, the princes have terrified Europe,—in which case they are honoured by being caged like lions.

So from henceforth, dear readers, you must bid

good-bye to the bursts of passion of the "Last of the Laidmanoirs," the fits of melancholy of Potich, and the outbreaks of caprice of Mademoiselle Desgarcins, to whom I had now no more bottles of soda-water to give, happy if only I had clear water left to drink, at a time when so many folks who had won instead of lost by the last change of government were forced to drink very muddy stuff.

As for Mysouff, he was treated as a political prisoner; though as a matter of fact his confinement, it will be remembered, had a much less honourable origin, he regained his liberty by reason of present events.

There still remained Diogenes. This, the reader may recollect, was the name given by Michel to the vulture, in virtue of the tub in which it had taken up its residence. Well, he was despatched to the *Restaurant Henri IV* as a present to my friend and neighbour Collinet, my rival in the culinary art, and the populariser, if not the inventor, of *cotêlettes à la béarnaise*. Go and order breakfast there, wash down the aforesaid cutlets with champagne, and see what a famous meal you will have!

To say nothing of the fact that, on entering and leaving the house, you may have the opportunity of seeing Diogenes—no longer in his tub, but mounted on a perch.

At Collinet's, Diogenes was in a veritable land of plenty. The bird prospered hugely in health and good looks, and by way of testifying proper gratitude, it lays him an egg every year—a thing the creature had never dreamt of doing when an inmate of my establishment.

That year all thoughts of sport had to be given up. Houses, lands, coaches, horses, all had fallen to zero;

but shooting licences had remained at exactly the same price, to wit five-and-twenty francs.

If I had treated myself to a gun licence in the year of grace 1848, I should have had left over that day only six francs, which would not have sufficed for the needs of such people and such animals as were still remaining in the house.

So Pritchard was requested to discontinue those invitations to dinner which in happier days he had been in the habit of issuing on the road from Saint-Germain to Marly.

Not that the order was in the least necessary; Pritchard's guests, once they had tasted the black broth of his present menu, never came back a second time!

CHAPTER XLIII

MY BEST PLAY AND MY BEST FRIEND

IT was in the course of this same year that I visited the Department of the Yonne and made the acquaintance of my two excellent shooting comrades, Gaignez and Charpillon. But for this particular year, as I have said before, there was no use thinking of sport.

No, I am wrong; on the contrary, I enjoyed some of the roughest sport I had ever known—hunting for votes!

I have already related how, nine hundred individuals having been found in France more intelligent than myself, I had come back having *mulled my shot*, as we say in sporting language.

Yet in offering myself to the electors, I was making a genuine sacrifice for my country. As Deputy, I should only receive twenty-five francs a day, while as Journalist, I could go on making one-and-thirty.

This state of things lasted a year,—I am speaking of my own financial position, not of the general state of the country. During this year I saw the accomplishment of the fifteenth change of government at which I have been present since the day of my birth.

About August 25, 1849, I found I had to face the world with a sum of three hundred francs. As

this may seem incredible in these days of scarcity and distress, let me explain at once I had neither borrowed nor stolen the money.

No, I had written a play called *Le Comte Hermann.*

So many impossible fables that everybody pretends to believe grow up about each drama of mine that sees the light that I am not sorry to have the opportunity of describing in some detail the genesis of this particular production.

One day, one of my fellow-workers, Lefebvre by name, came to me bringing me a comedy that had been accepted at the Vaudeville and bearing as title: *Une Vieille Jeunesse.*

In spite of all protests, he read it to me, begging me to recast the piece and become his collaborator. I have always had a horror of collaboration, and yet so yielding is my temper I have again and again allowed myself to be over-persuaded.

This time I held out, and though I could glimpse as through a fog the five Acts of a fine, impressive play that would bear no sort of resemblance to the petty comedy in three acts that Lefebvre was reading out to me, I told him point-blank—

"I will not work on your play. Bring it out, as it has been accepted; make all the money you can out of it, and when the management has done with it, *I* will give you a thousand francs for your plot."

Lefebvre seemed dimly to see a way of extracting more money from his piece after it was dead than he ever hoped to get from it when alive. So he made me repeat my offer, which he could not make head or tail of. I did so; then he understood and instantly accepted.

Six months afterwards, the piece had had its little run and was fallen dead; the author brought me the

corpse. The play had not even attained the honour of print.

As I always do, I let the thing lie by me till the inspiration seized me. Then one fine morning the *Comte Hermann* found itself finished and complete in my head. A week later, it was down on paper; a month more and it was walking the boards of the Théâtre-Historique in the person of Mélingue, supported by Madame Person and Laferrière. It was one of my best plays, and proved one of my most conspicuous successes.

To make a long story short, thanks to this triumph, I found myself, as I said, about August 25, the proud possessor of a sum of three hundred francs.

Just then I heard tell of a certain M. Bertram as having a shooting to let in the neighbourhood of Melun. I hurried off to find him; he occupied a fourth-floor apartment in the Rue des Marais-Saint-Germain.

The shooting did not belong to him, it appeared, but to M. de Montesquieu. His price was eight hundred francs. We discussed the terms for a bit, and finally he let me the shooting at six hundred francs, but on one condition.

I was to set out next day, with a line from him, go round the property accompanied by the gamekeeper, to whom the note was addressed, assure myself of the head of game on the ground, and if satisfied, we would then sign at the price mentioned.

Accordingly, next morning I took Pritchard with me, shouldered my gun, put a dozen cartridges in my pocket, and took the train for Melun.

Arrived there, I inquired for the place where my shooting was situated, and for five francs engaged a conveyance to take me there and bring me back.

The harvest had been exceptionally early that year, so that in the Department of the Seine, and the neighbouring parts, the shooting season had opened on August 25.

I soon found the keeper; he read M. Bertram's note, who authorised me to take the opportunity of firing a few shots as well. As the man's most ardent desire was for the shooting to be let,—which had not been arranged the year before,—he set out immediately to show me the way, after first casting a scornful look at Pritchard.

On leaving his house, we were right on the scene of action. Pritchard instantly dashed up on to a hillock and saw a field of beetroot waving green in the distance. He made straight for this, galloping over a ploughed field that lay between. I let him do as he pleased with a look of perfect indifference.

"Sir," the keeper addressed me, "I would point out that your shooting only covers five hundred acres; that on these five hundred acres there are eight or ten coveys of partridges, and three or four hundred hares. If you don't keep your dog to heel, he'll spoil the best field we have, and start five or six hares and two or three coveys before we've got there at all."

"Don't you trouble about Pritchard," I told the man. "He has his own way of managing, and it's a way I am used to. Leave him alone in his beet-roots, and let us see what is to be found in this ploughed field that separates us from it."

"There ought to be two or three hares, sir. Hi! look, look! . . . there goes one, right in front of us."

Before the fellow had ceased speaking, the hare was dead.

Pritchard paid no attention to the shot, but dashed round this field so as to get up the wind.

Meantime a second hare bolted, and I let him have my second barrel. He was so hard hit that after a hundred yards he was obliged to stop, and toppled over; he was as dead as the first.

Pritchard, who was now pointing, paid no heed either to the shot or the hare which had fallen dead within twenty paces of where he was.

The keeper picked up the two hares, remarking that M. Bertram's note no doubt authorised me to fire a few shots, but that he thought it his duty to beg me not to shoot any more hares, but merely go after the birds.

"In that case," I told him, "let us make a detour and get up the wind, the same as Pritchard has done."

"Oh, sir, your dog will never wait for you!"

"Never fear," I told him. "You are going to see him at work. But meantime, if you have anything to do, your pipe to light for instance, now's your time."

"No, thank you, I've just put it back in my pocket."

"Well, at any rate," I said, pulling a flask from my pocket, "have a sip of brandy; it's the best cognac."

"Ah! a drop of brandy, sir, there's no refusing that," said the keeper. "But your dog——?"

"Oh! as for my dog—I told you we had plenty of time; so don't let us hurry."

"Do you know he has been pointing a good five minutes already?"

"How long will it take us to come up with him?"

"Oh! five minutes, or thereabouts."

"And another five to have a rest. So by the time we reach him it will be a quarter of an hour."

"Well, he's a first-class dog, all the same!" declared the keeper. "It's a pity he has lost an eye and a leg."

In another five minutes we reached the spot where Pritchard was.

"In five minutes more," I said to the keeper, "we are going to have a try to kill a brace of birds right in front of his nose; and if we succeed, you will see he won't budge an inch till I have had time to reload my gun."

"Well, if he does that," replied the man, "he's a dog that's worth five hundred francs if he's worth a farthing."

"Yes," I agreed, "for the first week, yes—that is to say as long as the game holds out. Now," I went on, "we are going to try an experiment. Judging by the direction of Pritchard's eye, I think he is pointing at a covey ten yards or so in front of him. Well, I am going to step back fifteen paces; then I shall fire my shot at the point his eye is fixed on—most likely bang into the middle of a covey of partridges. If I don't kill, and the birds don't rise, Pritchard will not stir; if I kill one or two out of the lot, and the rest still don't take wing, again Pritchard won't budge; if the whole covey makes off, and amongst the lot there's one wounded bird, Pritchard will follow that one till it falls."

The keeper shrugged his shoulders and wagged his head in a way that said plainly: "By the Lord! if he does so, I've no more to say."

I stepped back my fifteen paces, knelt down, and aiming straight over Pritchard's nose, fired.

A brace of birds rose and tumbled head over heels in the air, showing their white under feathers, while four yards from them a hare bolted, scurrying away as if my shot had been fired specially for him.

Pritchard never stirred.

"Well?" I said, turning to the keeper.

"Oh!" he said, "let's finish the thing; it's too curious altogether."

I reloaded, and walked up to the dog. Pritchard looked up at me, as if to ask if I was ready, and on my nodding permission, dashed forward.

A covey of fifteen or sixteen birds got up. I killed one with my first barrel, while with the second I hit another in the back, and, as birds so wounded always do, it rose right up almost vertically in the air.

What I had foretold happened; Pritchard gave his sole attention to the wounded bird, keeping his eye on it and following its flight, so that when it fell heavily to the ground, it almost lighted in the dog's jaws.

There was no need to indulge in more slaughter. I knew what I wanted to know; the land was well stocked with game. I returned to Paris, and hurrying at once to see my friend d'Orsay, told him of my good luck.

I found him busy on a bust of Lamartine.

Now d'Orsay, the Count d'Orsay, brother of the beautiful Madame de Grammont, is one of those men whose name I love to find from time to time under my pen. I have always something new to say of him,—and, what is more, something good.

Well, d'Orsay was making a bust of Lamartine. For, besides being a great nobleman, d'Orsay was a great artist; both his drawings and sculptures were marked with a consummate elegance. Possibly the technical qualities of his work might be open to criticism; but no one had a better grasp than he of the ideal.

The only portrait left us of Byron, the one the poet demanded should be prefixed to his works, was by d'Orsay.

This perfection of taste coloured all he did. Of only moderate fortune, and compelled towards the end

of his life to look carefully after his expenditure after having long reigned as the leader of fashion in France and England, he had rented in some minor street, the name of which I have forgotten, a sort of garret, which he had transformed into the most elegantly appointed studio in all Paris.

For ten years he had dictated the mode to France and England. His tailor, whose fortune he made, was renowned for the extraordinary skill he displayed in dressing his customers according to the class of life they belonged to, marking distinctions with an almost magical subtlety.

One day a country squire, a friend of d'Orsay's, was going to spend a month in London. He pays a visit to the Count, and thus addresses him—

"Look here, you are my friend. I am come to town, and I mean to spend some time there. I don't want to look ridiculous; I am neither a dandy nor a City merchant, I am a country gentleman. Take a good look at me, and tell your tailor how he ought to dress me."

D'Orsay looks him over, goes to his collection of walking sticks—d'Orsay possessed fifty or sixty of all sorts—picks out one the handle of which was a curved stag's foot shod with silver.

"There," he told his friend, "go and see Blindem, and tell him to dress you for that stick."

And Blindem dressed the gentleman for that stick, and with nothing else to guide him; and never, he owned it himself, was he better dressed.

D'Orsay's drawings were marvels. I remember one night at Masnef's, a young Russian and a friend of mine, where he spent the evening in making lead-pencil sketches of us all. I have never seen a more curious and interesting collection than these drawings formed,

among which was the portrait of a young girl, a charming figure beyond all question, but whom he had made—an uncommon achievement—I will not say prettier, but more angelic than she really was. What has become, I wonder, of this portrait, to which he had only to add wings for it to pass as the work of Fra Angelico?

D'Orsay was not only elegant, but supremely handsome too; not only supremely handsome, but charmingly witty into the bargain. And these qualities he retained to the end of his life.

Well, I went to his rooms to propose our taking the shooting between us. He readily agreed, but on condition we asked his nephew, the Duc de Guiche, now Duc de Grammont and Envoy at Venice, to join us. I could wish for nothing better; I was as deeply attached to de Guiche as I was to d'Orsay.

Accordingly we took the shooting between the three of us. As there was no time to lose, we resolved to make the next day but one our opening day.

We went that very day to sign the agreement at Maître Bertram's, who insisted on one small restriction: paying six hundred francs, we were not for this sum to kill more than a hundred hares, making thirty-three hares apiece; partridges were not specially mentioned in the bargain. Any of us killing a hare more than his allowance was to be fined five francs.

By midday on our first day's shooting I had killed eleven hares.

Needless to say Pritchard had been the butt, on the part of my two aristocratic friends, of endless jokes, which, as was always his way, he turned eventually to his own honour and renown.

CHAPTER XLIV

FLORA

THE following year I went once more to see M. Bertram, fully expecting, in view of the excellent relations that had always existed between us, and the presents of game I had sent him from time to time during the shooting season, to obtain the same favourable conditions as on the first occasion.

But I was altogether mistaken. The price of the shooting was doubled.

My means not allowing me to pay so high a price, I made up my mind to go for the shooting to one of my friends who lives in Normandy.

His château lay a few leagues from Bernay. He came to meet us on horseback, accompanied by two great white greyhounds that I had given him.

"Ah! look at M. Ernest, sir!" exclaimed Michel, directly he caught sight of him; "he's just like the Queen of England."

The fact is Michel had, hung up in his room, an engraving after a picture by Dedreux, representing the Queen of England mounted on a black horse and accompanied by two white greyhounds. I told Ernest of the likeness Michel saw between him and Queen Victoria, and he was highly flattered.

I had a poor day's shooting, although I had slipped away by myself—bolted from the rails, as they say

in the language of the turf—for fear of Pritchard's playing some of his usual tricks on my fellow-sportsmen.

I was coming home with a brace or two of birds and a hare in Michel's game-bag when I met a countryman holding in leash a handsome brown bitch, three or four years old to all appearance.

"Egad!" I remarked to Michel, "if yonder good fellow would part with his bitch at a reasonable figure, she's just the animal would suit my book."

"But," objected Michel, "Monsieur forgets he commissioned his friend Devisme to buy him a dog, and with that object authorised him to spend a hundred and fifty francs."

"Pooh!" said I, "Devisme has doubtless forgotten. If he had bought me a dog, he would have done so in time for the opening of the season. On the eve of that day all the dogs are to buy; a fortnight later all are to sell. Go and have a word with the good man," I insisted — and Michel accordingly went up to the countryman.

"'Od's life!" began the fellow, "your master's best plan would be to get me to drown his dog there, which has only three legs and one eye left, instead of my bitch, and buy her to take the animal's place."

"Why, are you going to drown your bitch, my fine fellow?" Michel asked him.

"Alas, sir! if it's not to-day, it will have to be to-morrow. Why, they have no common sense! They go and clap a tax of ten francs a head on dogs, while we human beings only pay two! Isn't it humiliating that a dumb beast should be rated five times as high as a man? No, no; folk are not rich enough in these days, when they have two children to feed, to feed a dog into the bargain—especially when the animal pays a ten francs' tax."

"Then you offer to give your bitch to my master, eh?"

"Oh yes; with all my heart!" cried the countryman. "I'm sure she'll be happy with him."

"Happy? as happy as a queen!" Michel assured him. You see Michel was a prudent man, and did not guarantee any extravagant degree of happiness.

"Well, then," continued the man, with a sigh, "go and ask the gentleman if he'll take Flora."

On Michel's coming back to me, I asked, "And have you been successful in your negotiations, Michel, and is the man reasonable in his demands?"

"You must judge for yourself, sir," returned Michel: "he offers to let you have the animal for nothing."

"What! for nothing?"

"Yes, only think: he was just on his way to drown the poor beast."

"But why was he going to drown his dog?" I asked Michel. "Was she mad?"

"No, sir; on the contrary, as gentle as a sheep. But what would you have?—he's drowning her because he has no bread to spare at home for himself, his wife, and his two children."

"There, Michel, there's ten francs; give them to the poor fellow, and bring the animal here to me."

"The fact is . . ." stammered Michel, in some embarrassment, "I ought to mention one thing."

"What is that?"

"That the bitch is called Flora."

"Well, yes, Michel, it is rather a pretentious name certainly; but come, a dog doesn't deserve to be chucked into the river merely because she's called after the Goddess of Springtime."

As a gardener Michel protested—

"But I always thought, sir, she was the Goddess of Gardens."

"No, Michel; without wishing to impugn your knowledge of heathen mythology, I must tell you gardens have as their protecting divinity not a goddess but a god known as Vertumnus (Vertumne)."

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Michel, "like M. Vertumne of the Théâtre-Français, the gentleman I used to ask for tickets."

"Verteuil, you mean, Michel, don't you?—a very charming fellow!"

"He has his days like other people. . . . Ah, well! for my part, I have always called him Vertumne."

"The days when you called him so were probably his bad days; but as for me, as I have always called him Verteuil, I never noticed anything of what you say."

"All the same, he ought to marry."

"Who ought? Verteuil?"

"No, no; this Vertumnus of yours. He ought to marry Flora."

"You are a bit late in making the demand, Michel; he married, just about two thousand eight hundred years ago, a nymph of a very good family, by name Pomona."

"Ah! is that so?" said Michel, evidently put out.

Then, returning to our previous topic—

"So," he resumed, "you have no objection to the name Flora?"

"It is a trifle pretentious, as I observed before; but there, I shall get used to it."

Michel took two or three steps in the direction of the countryman, but then almost immediately turned back again, scratching the tip of his nose—a habit he had acquired since the day when Turk, an idiot dog

which I have scarcely mentioned because he was not worth mentioning, all but bit that organ in two.

"What is it, Michel?"

"It struck me, sir, that before I give the fellow ten francs, and that for an animal he was going to drown, I have a right to ask him if she can retrieve and point."

"Michel, that's a great deal to require for ten francs! It's as much as you ask of a dog costing a hundred crowns. Michel, give the man his ten francs, take Flora, and . . . let's trust in Providence!"

So Michel gave the countryman the money, and we took Flora home with us. Providence was good, and we found she could both point and retrieve as well as any hundred-crown dog.

But, alas! her mythological name brought misfortune in its train: Flora died like Eurydicé.

CHAPTER XLV

THE DEATH OF PRITCHARD

ON reaching the château, I found a letter from my daughter, who informed me that Devisme had secured me, for a hundred and twenty francs, a superb dog, by name Catinat; she asked whether she should send the animal on to me or wait till I returned home, leaving him meantime in the stable, where she had given him quarters.

I wrote back to tell her to leave Catinat where he was,—in the stable, that is to say,—adding that I expected to be back in Paris by the next day but one.

Next morning, when he came to call me, Michel announced that in all probability our wishes were going to be fulfilled with regard to a new generation of little Pritchards. He thereupon advised, in order to prevent Flora being annoyed by her lover's attentions, to take her out alone, leaving Pritchard in his kennel. We could form an opinion at the same time as to what she was good for. It was sound advice, and we set off with Flora, in spite of the despairing howls of poor Pritchard.

Flora turned out to be a good average sporting dog, without any marked faults or any very startling merits. It is very certain that, but for the chance that brought her in my road, her life would have remained in the

most complete obscurity, and her death, whatever it were, would have done nothing to make her famous.

Fortunately, one of the merits she did possess was to run close under the guns. On the whole I was very well content with my new purchase. Flora was one of those animals you buy for a hundred and twenty francs the day before the opening day of the season and sell for forty the day after its close.

Pritchard gave a wildly enthusiastic welcome to Flora on our return. He was a dog of good breeding, who was anxious, by dint of fond attentions, to make his innamorata forget his infirmities and injuries.

We took leave of our Bernay friends, and made the best of our way back to Paris on September 3, 1850.

This year the season opened late in the Department of the Yonne, not till the 5th. A letter from my friends at Auxerre informed me that, if I would promise to come for the opening day, as I was hand-in-glove with Mayors and Deputy-Mayors, they would defer the beginning of the shooting till the 10th. This communication was not without influence on my hurried departure from Bernay.

On reaching home, my first care was to ask to see Catinat. With this end, we began by shutting up Pritchard and Flora in the dining-room, while Catinat was brought up to my working-room.

I was then residing in a small hôtel, which I occupied alone with my eleven fowls, my heron, Pritchard, and Michel, and which was now to give admittance—at least I thought so—to two new inmates, Flora and Catinat.

Catinat was a sturdy brach-hound, three or four years old, wild, rampageous, and quarrelsome. He bounded upstairs, leapt at my throat as if he wanted to strangle me, knocked over my daughter's easels,

jumped on to the table where my weapons and china figures were ranged, showing me at once that it would be in the last degree injudicious to admit him into any sort of familiar intercourse with the household.

I called Michel and told him this superficial introduction was quite enough for the present, and that I meant to defer till the beginning of the shooting season at Auxerre the pleasure of a more intimate acquaintance. Michel therefore was invited to take Catinat back to the stable.

I am bound to say the poor fellow had a presentiment of coming evil at the mere sight of the dog.

"Oh, sir," he said, "that animal will do us a mischief! I can't say what yet, but he will, I feel sure he will!"

"Well, meantime, Michel," I bade him, "put Catinat back in his stable."

But Catinat, who no doubt was conscious himself that an author's working-room was no place for him, had gone downstairs again of his own accord. Only, unfortunately, as he did so, he found the door of the dining-room standing open, and pushed his way in.

Not Hector and Achilles felt at first sight so fierce and sudden a hate of one another as Catinat and Pritchard. They sprang at each other, with instinctive and unpremeditated hostility, so furiously that Michel was forced to call me to his aid to part them.

Whether from constitutional apathy, or perhaps from that cruel vanity which causes the she lion no less than the human female rather to like seeing two rivals tearing one another to pieces for her sake, Flora had remained indifferent during the fight, which after all was only a momentary savage tuzzle, thanks to Michel's and my own intervention.

Still Catinat appeared to be bleeding at the throat, the blood showing at once on his white coat. As for Pritchard, his brindled colour concealed his wounds, if he had received any.

To enable the reader to comprehend the events that occurred next, it is indispensable for him to have some approximate idea of the disposition of the out-buildings attached to the little hôtel in the Rue d'Amsterdam.

The main door giving on the street opened in the opposite direction on a small garden, longer than it was broad, at the bottom of which I had found, on taking possession, coach-houses, a stable, and a second court serving as a stable-yard. Now, since the Revolution of 1848 I had possessed neither horses nor carriages. I had turned the coach-houses into a big room for writing and general business; the stable into a lumber room, where all sorts of rubbish was deposited; and the stable-yard into a poultry-run, where my eleven hens and my cock Cæsar perched and cackled and laid, and where, in a huge kennel, a veritable canine palace, Pritchard had lorded it hitherto.

Pritchard's friendliness with the fowls had suffered no diminution. In fact, we know from what we saw in Charpillon's hen-run the good account he turned it to in his own interests; from that day on the poor laying of my own fowls was sufficiently accounted for in my eyes.

Pritchard resumed his place in the poultry-yard, and as the kennel was large enough both for him and Flora, the latter shared his abode as a wife should.

Catinat was sent back to the stable, where he had been installed in the first instance, but which he had left temporarily on my arrival.

Michel, as usual, was in charge of all the live stock quadrupeds and bipeds alike.

That evening, while my daughter and I were taking the air in the garden, he came up to me, twisting his cap about in his hands—a plain sign he had something important to say to me.

"Well, what is it, Michel?" I asked.

"Sir," he began, "an idea occurred to me as I was taking Pritchard and Flora to the poultry-yard, and that is, that we have no eggs because Pritchard eats them, as Monsieur saw at Saint-Bris, and Pritchard eats them because he is in direct communication with the fowls."

"Yes, it is self-evident, Michel, that if Pritchard could not get into the poultry-yard, he would not eat the eggs."

"Well, sir, it seems to me," Michel went on, "that if we were to put Catinat—a dog of no education, I imagine, but not a thief, like that low Pritchard—it seems to me that if we were to put Pritchard and Flora in the stable, and Catinat in the poultry-yard, things would go better."

"Do you know what would happen then, Michel?" I objected. "It may be, as you say, Catinat would not be able to eat the eggs, but he might very well eat the hens."

"Oh, if such a disaster happened, I have a way of curing him for all the rest of his life of any desire to eat fowls."

"Yes, Michel; but then, meantime, the fowls would be eaten."

I had hardly spoken when there rose among the outbuildings an uproar as if a whole pack of hounds was in full cry—yells of rage, yelps of pain, every sign of a death struggle being fought out.

"Good Lord, Michel! do you hear that?"

"Yes, I hear right enough," he said calmly; "but it's M. Pigeory's dogs."

"Michel, it's Catinat and Pritchard eating each other up—that and nothing else!"

"Sir, it's impossible; I separated them."

"Well, Michel, they have managed to meet again, that's all."

"No difficulty about that—the scoundrels are quite capable of it; why, that blackguard Pritchard could open the stable door as easily as any locksmith."

"Well, Pritchard being a dog of spirit, no doubt he has opened the stable door in order to defy Catinat. Listen: upon my word, I am very much afraid one or other of them may have been killed."

Michel dashed down the path leading to the stable, and disappeared; in a few moments I heard sounds of lamentation, indicating that some great calamity had befallen.

Another second or two and I saw Michel reappear, sobbing and carrying Pritchard in his arms.

"Look, look, sir!" he cried. "Poor Pritchard's done for! Look at the state he's in—all the doing of M. Devisme's fine new dog! His name should be Catiline, I say, instead of Catinat."

I hurried up to Michel; for all the rages the animal had often put me into, I was much attached to Pritchard. He was the only dog in whom I had found true originality and that element of the unexpected to be met with in a man of quick wits and lively caprice.

"Now, Michel, tell me what's wrong?"

"Wrong, sir, wrong? Why, he's dead!"

"No, no, Michel; not yet."

"Anyway, he's as good as dead"—and he laid the poor beast on the ground.

Michel's shirt was all covered with blood.

"Pritchard! my poor Pritchard!" I sobbed.

Like the dying Gaul, Pritchard opened his yellow eye, looked at me sadly and lovingly, threw out his four paws, stiffened his body, heaved a sigh, and died.

Catiline, with one snap of his jaws, had severed the carotid artery, and death had been almost instantaneous.

"Well, well, Michel!" I said, "we may not have lost a good servant, but we have lost a good friend. . . . You must wash him carefully, poor fellow! We will give you something to wrap him in; then you must dig a hole in the garden, and we will have a tombstone erected on which we will inscribe this epitaph:—

> "Comme le grand Rantzau, d'immortelle mémoire,
> Il perdit, mutilé, quoique toujours vainqueur,
> La moitié de son corps dans les champs de la gloire,
> Et Mars ne lui laissa rien d'entier que le cœur."[1]

As I always did under such circumstances, I sought relief from my regrets in work.

However, about midnight, feeling a wish to see if my orders with regard to Pritchard's burial had been duly carried out, I stole softly downstairs, to find Michel seated on the steps of the dining-room with the dog's body lying at his feet.

Michel's grief was in no way assuaged; he was groaning and sobbing as bitterly as when he first brought Pritchard to me in his arms.

Only two wine bottles, which I conjectured to be empty because both were lying on their sides on the floor, showed me that, as in antique obsequies, Michel had not neglected the proper libations to the dead

[1] "Like the great Rantzau, of immortal memory, he lost by mutilation, though always victorious, the half of his person on the fields of glory, and Mars left him nothing entire but the brave heart only."

and I withdrew firmly convinced that if he was not weeping pure wine, the faithful Michel was at any rate crying wine and water.

For his part, so absorbed was he in his sorrow that he neither saw nor heard me.

CATINAT LEAPT AT MY THROAT AS IF HE WANTED TO STRANGLE ME

CHAPTER XLVI

A WAY MICHEL HAD OF CURING DOGS OF THE BAD HABIT OF EATING FOWLS

NEXT morning I was awakened at daybreak by Michel, who had not been to bed at all.

Much has been said of Talma's entry on the stage in Ducis' version of the tragedy of *Hamlet*. I can judge of its effect, for I have seen it two or three times.

I have only seen Michel's entry into my room once; but this once entirely effaced from my memory the thrice-repeated impression of Talma's famous piece of acting.

Never did Talma, in horror and amazement, give forth his dreadful cry at sight of the father's ghost in such appalling tones as those in which Michel uttered the simple words, three times repeated—

"Oh, sir! oh, sir! oh, sir!"

I opened my eyes, and by the first glimmer of the dawning day, in the dim grey light of the hour when the sun is still striving with the darkness, I saw Michel standing before me with pale face and dishevelled hair, his arms raised with a frantic gesture to the sky.

"What is it now, Michel?" I asked him, half in alarm, half in annoyance at being roused at so untimely an hour.

"Oh, sir! you don't know what he has done, that brigand of a Catiline?"

"Yes, I do, Michel: he has killed Pritchard, and I know——"

"Ah yes, sir; if that were all he had done——"

"What! *if that were all?* But surely that is enough, I imagine."

"If Monsieur will come down to the poultry-yard, he'll see."

"See? What shall I see? Out with it——"

"A general massacre, sir! a veritable St. Bartholomew!"

"Our fowls, Michel?"

"Yes, sir; birds that were worth a hundred francs apiece—not to mention the cock, which was priceless."

"A hundred francs, Michel?"

"Yes, yes, sir, a hundred francs. Why, there was actually one that had no feathers at all, that seemed to be covered with veritable hair—beautiful silky hair. You remember the one, sir. That hen was worth a hundred and fifty francs."

"And the dog has killed them all?"

"Yes, sir, all—from the first to the last!"

"Ah, well, Michel! yesterday you said that if Catiline killed the fowls, you knew a way of curing him of this fault——"

"To be sure, sir."

"Well, have you buried Pritchard?"

"Yes, sir; he lies under the lilacs"—and Michel wiped away a tear with the sleeve of his jacket. "Poor Pritchard, he would never have done such a thing!"

"Well, well, Michel! come, what is to be your course of action under these dreadful circumstances?"

"For my part, sir, I must own that this morning I was very nearly taking Monsieur's gun and putting an end to that blackguardly Catiline."

"Michel, Michel, such extremities are all very well for Cicero, who was a lawyer, who was in mortal terror, and who was determined to assure the triumph of the gown over the sword; but we, we who are Christians, know that God wills the repentance, not the death, of a sinner."

"You think Catiline will ever repent, sir? Not he; he's ready at this moment to begin again. Yesterday, Pritchard; to-day, the fowls. No, nothing will stop him, sir! . . . To-morrow it will be me; the day after it will be you."

"But after all, Michel, you say you have a way of curing dogs of the foul trick of killing fowls; so let us try your method first. If Catiline still goes on, it will then be time enough to resort to extreme measures."

"That is Monsieur's final decision?"

"Yes, Michel."

"Very well, then; as soon as all's ready, I will let Monsieur know."

Then Michel left me and went downstairs again. Half an hour afterwards I felt some one shaking me by the shoulder.

It was Michel waking me up a second time—for I must admit that, despite yesterday's murder and this morning's carnage, I had dropped off to sleep again.

"It's all ready, sir," he told me.

"The deuce! then I must get up, eh?"

"Yes, sir; unless Monsieur prefers to watch proceedings from his window. But Monsieur won't see well in that case."

"Where is the execution to be, Michel?—for I presume there is to be one."

"In the outhouse at the side of the courtyard."

"Very well, Michel; down you go. I will follow you."

I slipped on a *pantalon à pieds* and a loose jacket, put on my slippers, and descended the stairs. I had only to pass out of doors and go into the outhouse opposite.

There I found Michel holding Catiline on his chain with one hand and carrying in the other a curious-looking instrument of which I could make nothing at first. This was a cross-piece of green wood, split up the middle, to which was tied by the neck a black hen, the only one of my eleven fowls of that colour.

"If Monsieur would like to see the victims," said Michel, "they lie in a row on the dining-room table."

I cast an eye over the table, and there I saw, as Michel said, all my poor feathered family, bleeding, torn, and covered with mud.

My gaze wandered from the table to Catiline, whom this grievous spectacle appeared to leave absolutely callous. This want of feeling hardened my heart.

"Come, Michel," I said, "to work!"

With the words we sallied out. It was the hour of executions—four o'clock in the morning. We entered the empty outhouse, and shut the door behind us.

"There!" said Michel, shortening Catiline's chain; "now, if Monsieur will hold him by the collar, he'll see what he shall see."

I gripped the dog by the collar while Michel seized his tail, and, in spite of his growls, prising open the split with his knife, he opened the wood slightly, and through the opening crammed four or five inches of Catiline's tail.

"Let go, sir," he cried.

And, while I released the collar, he did the same

PRITCHARD LOOKED AT ME SADLY AND LOVINGLY . . . . AND DIED

with the piece of wood, which, snapping together, closed on the culprit's tail and squeezed it violently.

Catiline darted away with a yell of pain. But he was caught. The stick imprisoned his tail too tight for any obstacle whatever he might encounter to rid him of this new sort of drag.

At the same moment, the fowl, which was firmly fastened to the cross-piece, being violently shaken by the dog's struggles, began leaping up and down on his back, tumbling on the ground, then bouncing back again on to his shoulders. Deceived by this factitious appearance of life, Catiline thought it was the bird and its furious pecks that were causing him such agonies of pain.

The quicker he ran the more violent grew the pain, and Catiline dashed to and fro more and more wildly. He would stop, wheel round, give a savage bite at the fowl; then, thinking he had killed the bird, he would set off again. But by this momentary respite he had only won a sharper pang than ever. He began a series of howls, that moved my compunction but produced no effect on the implacable Michel. Driven to madness, Catiline dashed among the piles of wood, hurled himself against the walls, vanished from sight, reappeared, his career getting every moment wilder and more reckless, till at last, panting, exhausted, done for, unable to take another step, he sank on the ground with a long-drawn groan.

Thereupon Michel went up to Catiline, once more prised open the piece of wood with his knife, released the dog's bleeding tail, without the latter seeming to experience any great relief on the termination of his punishment.

I thought he was dead. I stepped up to where the poor beast lay; his limbs were as stiff as a hare's that

has been hunted to death; only the eyes were open and still kept a feeble spark of life.

"Michel," I ordered, "take a jug of water and empty it over his head."

Michel looked about him. He saw a bucket containing water, brought as much as his two joined hands would hold, and emptied it over Catiline's head.

The animal sneezed and shook his head, but that was all.

"Oh, sir," sneered Michel, "what a fuss for a confounded villain like him! Let's carry him into the house, and if he comes round, well, so much the better!"

So saying, Michel took Catiline by the scruff of the neck, and, carrying him through the house, dropped him on the turf of the lawn.

Chance served us well. At the time of Catiline's execution, the sky had been overcast, as at the feast of Thyestes. But now, as if the storm did not condescend to burst in full fury for so minor an incident, and as if the thunders of heaven were reserved for mankind alone, the rain began to fall, but unaccompanied by thunder and lightning.

The rain gradually soaked Catiline's stiffened limbs. He drew them in one after the other, then presently got up on his four legs. But finding himself unable to stand, he sat down on his rump, and remained still and motionless, with lack-lustre eye and a look of complete stolidity.

"Michel," I said, "I think your lesson has been oversevere."

Michel went up to him again, but the animal made no sign, not even one of terror, at his approach. He bared his teeth, opened his eyes and closed them again, and shouted his name in his ears—but all without avail.

"Sir," he said, turning to me, "Catiline is gone silly altogether; we must send him to Sanfourche."

Sanfourche, as everybody knows, is the Esquirol of dogs. That very day the patient was duly conducted to the great veterinary's.

CHAPTER XLVII

JUSTIFYING WHAT WAS SAID AS TO THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN FLORA'S DEATH AND THAT OF EURYDICÉ

THE reader will remember how my Auxerre friends had offered to put off the shooting to the 10th September to suit my convenience.

I had written to tell them I should arrive on the evening of the 7th, and that the opening day might therefore be fixed for the 8th. This time I hoped to make a longer stay at Saint-Bris; so I brought work with me to last me two or three weeks.

We have said so much in different chapters about shooting matters that I will not tire my readers with further details of the sort. I will merely mention that, having in three weeks' time verified the fact that Flora was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, I begged my good friend Charpillon to keep her with him in the country till she had pupped.

Charpillon, who was aware that Pritchard was the father, and who was conscious of wrongs done towards that individual, asked me for no indemnity for Flora's board and lodging beyond the privilege of choosing one of the litter for himself. I made a condition on my side, which was that none of the pups should be drowned, as is generally done under pretext of the mother not being strong enough to bring them all up.

Finding myself already a quarter of the way there, I had determined to pay a visit to my friends at Marseilles; and to give myself a pretext for doing so in my own eyes, I had made arrangements with the manager of the *Gymnase Marseillais* for the production of a piece called *Les Gardes Forestiers*. The play was to be specially written for the local actors, and to have never been performed on any other stage.

My friend Bertheau offered me the sumptuous hospitality of his *bastide* or country house, La Blancarde. I stayed nearly a month at Marseilles. Then I returned to Charpillon's, who had made me promise to stop with him on my way back. I got there just in time to see Flora's litter arrive.

This consisted of five pups, of which it was impossible not to recognise Pritchard as the father. Each chose the one he preferred, and in twenty-four hours they all had a home. I contented myself with taking the one nobody else wanted.

Every day the keeper took Flora a little walk for the sake of her health. One day at the end of the first week he told us how he had come across a viper and killed it. These noxious creatures are fairly common in the woods of Saint-Bris, and we congratulated him on having diminished the number.

Next day he took out Flora as usual, but came back without her. The worthy fellow seemed deeply chagrined. He asked to have a word in private with Charpillon.

This is what had happened; he had not had the heart to tell us the story publicly. He had taken the same walk as the day before; on entering the path where he had killed the viper, Flora had scented the dead reptile, had run up to it, and then uttered a sharp, sudden cry.

Almost instantly she had gone into convulsions, and fallen dead as if struck by lightning.

The keeper knew very well that every effect has a cause, and searched for the reason of the catastrophe. A rustling among the leaves betrayed the presence of something crawling through the undergrowth; he pulled out the iron ramrod of his gun, pushed the bushes aside, and saw a viper trying to escape.

One blow with the ramrod stopped it instantly. What he now saw was not one viper only, but two—one dead, the other still alive. The one he had killed the day before was a female; the male had found it dying, and in hopes, no doubt, of bringing it back to life, had stayed close beside it all night. Thus the man had found them both when he searched the bushes—the dead reptile of the day before, and the other which had proved fatal to poor Flora.

It was no doubt due to the exasperation caused by grief of the male at the death of its mate that the venom had acquired such an extraordinary degree of energy as to kill Flora in a few seconds.

The dental cavities of vipers contain eight milligrammes of poison; the whole eight milligrammes are required to kill a dog, sixteen to kill a man. Now it is seldom that, under ordinary circumstances, the reptile expels the whole eight milligrammes of venom. But it has been observed that under the influence of anger, as also during the months of extreme heat, this poison, which is dangerous only when it enters the blood but is innocuous if swallowed, redoubles in intensity. It was doubtless to one of these circumstances, probably the first, that Flora owed her sudden death.

As with all accidents that are beyond remedy, we had to console ourselves as well as we could for this

disaster. I had not had time to grow extravagantly fond of the dog; I mourned her as much as her merits and the circumstances called for, and presently returned to Paris.

My first visit was to Sanfourche, to see how Catiline was progressing. The animal had recovered his wits, but he was afflicted with a sort of St. Vitus' dance, and the sight of a fowl gave him a violent attack of nerves.

Thus I found myself left with two dogs only—one a confirmed invalid, the other a puppy to be reared by hand!

Luckily, the first and most important days of the shooting were over, and I had time enough to provide myself better before the opening of the next season.

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